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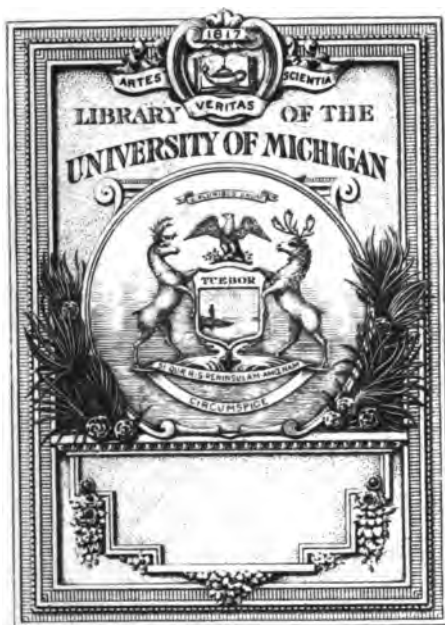
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GURNEY MARRIED.

VOL. III.

Hook, Theodora's story

GURNEY MARRIED:

A SEQUEL TO

GILBERT GURNEY.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "SAYINGS AND DOINGS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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GURNEY MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

THE funeral is over: Sniggs and his assistant and myself were the only mourners. Wells read the service with as much energy as his feelings, which were, in truth, more excited than I had anticipated, would permit. I waited, with a melancholy patience, to see the earth piled on the coffin; and while the sad work was going on, and just as the last shovelful, which hid the object from my sight, had been thrown into the grave, a woman, the wife of one of the smaller tradesmen of the place, exclaimed, close to my ear—

92-22-44 J.V.

“ Ah, poor little fellow ! if you had had a father or mother to take care of you, you would not be there now.”

This was particularly gratifying, no doubt, under all the circumstances, for it not only spoke a reproach which I felt perfectly conscious that I did not deserve, but it proved to me that the opinion generally prevalent amongst the Blissfold public was decidedly unfavourable to my tenderness of disposition and humanity of character, as well as those of my poor, dear, kind-hearted Harriet. Nor was this all ; for the moment the woman uttered the words, I almost unconsciously appealed with my eyes to Sniggs, who was standing a little in the rear, and saw him give his assistant a nudge, accompanied with a twitch of his nose, which I held to be indicative of his perfect agreement in her *dictum*, although I could not help thinking it might have applied more particularly and personally to himself than to me.

Upon my return home I found, as I had indeed expected, Kitty performing an extra-

ganza of grief, while Jane, deeply sorrowful, convinced me by the quiet sadness of her countenance and manner that she had—

“That within which passeth show.”

I gave them an account of the ceremony, at the termination of which detail Kitty sobbed out, “Then there really was no music after all?” A question which, from the way it was put, implied to my understanding a lurking belief on the part of the young lady that my previous statement of the inability of her favourite professor to attend, was not perfectly true. Harriet and I exchanged looks, but nothing was said.

The next question which was to be discussed and decided was the return of the young ladies to Montpelier, which they said, and Sniggs evidently thought, was to be effected under his care and tutelage. There was a sort of worrying anxiety about Kate to stay with us for a day or two longer than Cuthbert had prescribed, and an evident anxiety on the part of poor Jenny to

stay with us altogether; but I could not see any possible method of gratifying her wish, in opposition to the mandate of her father-in-law, and therefore, upon my long-established and frequently acted upon principle of waiting a little to see what would happen, I thought the best plan would be to postpone the consideration of it for a day or two, or even until called to it by a summons from Sniggs, who would, of course, write to Cuthbert a detailed account of the funeral, and receive his further commands; and with whose official precedence I had no inclination whatever to meddle. I merely asked Kitty, after her immoderate grief was somewhat calmed, and she had satisfied herself by one or two glances at the looking-glass that if she continued crying any longer she would decrease the general beauty of her countenance, whether Cuthbert had any particular day for their return to Bath.

"No," said Kate, "not exactly to a day; and I should like to stop with dear aunt for a day or two, because, now that poor dear Tom is

buried, we may go down and see Fanny and Bessy at their own house."

"Bessy," said Harriet, with a look, "will not be back for a week or ten days."

She might have added, "nor for a month, if you stay here so long;" for, as I have already noted, Bessy was sent to an intimate friend's house on an elastic visit, as Daly used to call it—a visit that was to be long or short accordingly as circumstances might render it agreeable or not. In point of fact, so long as Kate stayed at Ashmead, so long would Bessy stay at Southampton.

I remember, talking of elasticity, one curious instance, which I put upon record at the time, of the elasticity of turtle soup. About three years since I went to Brighton races—(the day may come when they shall cease to be gay and fashionable, for even now people begin to make Brighton a winter residence)—and stayed for four days at one of the inns there, which shall be nameless, inasmuch as, if anybody should get hold of my notes, I might do the landlord

of the said inn some injury by my statement.

We were five in our party, and the order of the day for each of the four days was "turtle;" the rest of the *matériel* varied at the discretion of mine host, but for the turtle we were

"Constant to the turtle, as the turtle is."

The first day, turtle was, as Doctor Mopey said, "Good, good, good!" second day, "Good, good, good!" third day, "Good, good, good!" fourth day, "Bad, bad, bad!"

"Why," cried I, "how is this? the turtle, which has been so excellent hitherto, is to-day absolutely Tebbsy."

"Vat is dat, Sir?" said our host.

"Why, thereby hangs a tale," said I; "but, in point of fact, instead of being in the slightest degree like that which has 'gone before,' is infernal 'wishy-washy stuff' not fit to be eaten."

"Ah! Sare," said mine host, "I know dat: it is no fault of mine; dere has been great

run upon de turtle dis week. I send to town for turtle—I tink, enough of him;—but no. Number von, turtle for two—number two, turtle for four—number dree, turtle for von—so on. Turtle, turtle, turtle—him last vell for dree days, but ven he come to de fourt—den I am obliged to stretch him out.”

“Stretch out the turtle!” said I; “how?”

“Vy, I vill dell you, Mr. Gorney,” said the landlord; “me ztreches him out mid a leetel vater.”

This “stretching out” I have never forgotten; so, however, as the soup was, was Bessy’s visit*.

“Gurney,” said Nubley, “I want five minutes’ talk with you—eh?—can’t guess what I want—eh? Will you come down stairs?—don’t want my wife in the way.”

“I am at your service,” said I.

“Will Mr. Sniggs come here to-day?” said Kate.

* We rather think Mr. Gurney has mentioned this incident elsewhere.—ED.

"Upon my word," replied I, "I do not know."

"But did you ask him?" said the girl, with a pertness which startled me.

"I cannot say I did," I replied: "it did not appear to me that the grave-side of so near a connexion as your brother, was a very fitting place for giving an invitation; besides, Mr. Sniggs has been so long in the habit of coming here whenever he pleases, and staying as long as he likes, that I hardly think an invitation at any time necessary."

"Yes," said Kate, tossing her head, and looking very, very impudent, "he used to come constantly to see dear Pappy when *he* was here."

"Come," said Nubley, who seemed full of something in the way of confidential communication; and I was glad he did, for, with all my resolution, I am not quite certain that I could have screwed myself to the task of giving the impertinent brat a civil answer—pretty as she was, and, by Jove! I must confess that goes a great way as a qualification.

Down we went, and when we entered my library, Nubley, desiring me to be seated, began, as was always his custom, to walk about the room, stubbling his chin, and occasionally leaning on the mantel-shelf and staring vacantly at himself in the glass. It is impossible to describe in writing the effect of the dialogue without contriving to mark all of that which he thought he did *not* utter, in contradistinction to that which he meant to meet my ear. I have found it difficult in noting down his former conversations to do this without breaking in upon the "thread of the discourse;" the best way will be to underscore—or, as the printers would say, put in italics, his muttered *thoughts*, of the utterance of which he was himself wholly unconscious; and thus, I think, a continuous course may be carried on without otherwise pointing out the difference between those and the words which he really meant should be heard.

"Gilbert," said he, "I have been thinking all night about this man Thompson, and his conduct. I don't see—eh?—why—not a bit—

why you should—eh?—take up my quarrel—
I think that will startle him—eh?—Gilbert?”

“My dear Sir,” said I, “if he follow up his visit, I must pursue the line I have taken. Why should you, wholly unconscious of affronting him, be, at your time of life, subjected to a meeting of such a kind with such——”

“Why not?” said Nubley. “I have fought before, and hit my man—and *an infernal stew I was in*—knocked him over—eh?—hit him in the pope’s eye—eh?—*deuced glad I hadn’t killed him*—why shouldn’t I fight my own battles?”

“Because I have taken your place,” said I.
“The thing is now irrevocable.”

“*He shan’t go out with him though*—Irrevocable is it?” said Nubley. “Now look ye—eh?—don’t you see—you have got a charming young wife—and you love her;—I have a wife, too, you’d say—*strange body*—but I have no child—*silly woman—no chance of having one now*.—Well—you have—I am twice as old as you, and more—my going out with *him*, or out of the world is nothing—*besides the fellow may miss*

me—eh?—so when he sends his man here, refer him to *me*.”

“ Well,” said I, having heard all, “ we’ll see about it, my dear Sir. I doubt the matter’s being carried any further, unless the Captain presumes upon his visit here to spread any reports prejudicial to either of our characters.”

“ Spread !” said Nubley ; “ how should he spread reports ? They are not upon speaking terms with any body in the place. And as for the nieces and cousins—*nieces, indeed—he ! he !*—not that I mean, dear Gurney, to disparage the ladies—eh?—*my inquisitive wife has found out all about ’em—nieces !—nieces !—ha ! ha ! ha !*—no but—they really *are* fine women—very handsome women—two or three nieces and a cousin a piece—*three ! ha ! ha ! ha !*—but—eh?—that’s no reason why we are to be bullied.”

“ Assuredly not,” said I : “ but as to your rent, have you——”

“ Not a pice,” said Nubley, “ not a cowrie—gad ! he must pay his rent before I go out with

him—clear off—eh!—else—what—if I kill *him* I can't recover of anybody else!"

"No," said I, "recovery after death, in his case, would be as improbable as in most others."

"*Pretty girl the second—he! he!*—They seem lively young women," said Nubley, "very—eh?—*he! he! he! nonsense!*—my wife hates them—detests them—*the old goose is jealous*—eh?—that's hard—I have my notions about 'em—eh?—but then—women are always hard upon women.—*His wife hates Kitty Fakasser worse than pyson* (so he pronounced the word).—However, mark, Gilbert—I insist upon it that you take no step—eh?—you understand—in this Thompson business without first speaking to me—*I'll take care and watch so that you shan't*—eh?—D'ye understand me?—*He's a good-hearted fellow, and his brother is an ass.* I beg, however, to thank you for what you have done—from my heart—eh?—I do—*he shall lose nothing by that*;—but remember—when that 'Monsieur Tonson

comes again,' let me know—I dare say he didn't think I had ever read that story—eh?—don't you see?"

"Yes," said I—and hear, too, thought I;—"you shall be obeyed to the letter." And I own I was greatly overcome, not to say surprised, to find so much sterling good in one, who, whatever respect for his age and long connexion with my brother, I might have felt, I certainly did not rank in that class of men to which, by his own inadvertent and unconscious expression of feeling and principle, he really belonged, till the development of this affair. I took up the cudgels for Nubley rather on account of his age and relative position to Cuthbert than for any other reason; but the little dialogue—if that may be so called—in which a third set of thoughts and opinions was developed, had raised the eccentric old gentleman very considerably in my estimation; nor was it unpleasant to me, deserted as it appeared I was by my nearest and only living relation, to find that the sentiments of his oldest

friend and long-continued partner were evidently favourable to me.

It never was my habit to look to results or study consequences, but I think one finds, under Providence, that right conduct uniformly meets its reward. When I took the course I adopted towards the man with the horsewhip, I never stopped to calculate what effect my following that which appeared to me to be the straight line might produce upon the worthy old gentleman. If the straight path had led to something which would have offended him in the bitterest manner, I should, with equal inconsideration, have taken it. The same in conversation, or remark ; as the thing strikes me, out it comes ; and although the thought of offending or wounding any human being is farthest from my heart or mind, I find people looking grave and glum because perchance something I have said may have applied to their own particular circumstances, of which I happened to be entirely ignorant, or have referred, by analogy, to some unfortunate blot in their characters, of which I was perfectly

unconscious. In this case, I went at Thompson ; I saw he was a bully, trying to establish a character, and I felt it my duty to an old man to put myself in the gap, and check what I conceived would have been an unresisted attack ; for I certainly did not think my dear old Nubley would have worked himself up into any very resolute resistance against his most obstreperous tenant ; whose motives for making the quarrel, I moreover believed to be the persuasion that his ancient landlord would have abated the rent of Chittagong Lodge altogether, by way of compromise for the alleged affront to the ladies. At all events, my mind was made up that Nubley, with all his self-promised activity on the subject, should, under no circumstances, hear more of the affair until it had been decided.

It is curious to observe how soon a concatenation is formed in the mind when the first link is caught hold of. In all my considerations of Cuthbert's probable future conduct with regard to Mrs. Brandyball, or all my reflections upon his almost unnatural abandonment of me and mine

in her favour, my thoughts had never glanced towards the possibility of Nubley ever becoming a mediator in my behalf with my most inert and immoveable brother. The unintentional disclosure of his feelings towards me, at once set me thinking upon a point which certainly had not previously stricken me, and I resolved, after the Thompson seasoning which I was destined to undergo, to lead the good-hearted old gentleman to the subject.

Shortly after our conversation, I received a note from Sniggs, of which the following is a copy:—

“ Dear Sir,

“ I did not like to trespass on you immediately after the melancholy ceremony of this morning to ask you whether you proposed to write, by this evening’s post, to Mr. Cuthbert Gurney, or whether I should convey any communication in the letter which I shall despatch to him, in conformity with his directions.

“ I should have gone up to Ashmead to ask you this question, but my anxiety not to intrude

at such a season hindered me. May I hope that Mrs. Gurney and the dear young ladies are as well as we have a right to expect them to be? Will you be good enough to ask them if they have anything to send?

“Yours, dear Sir, faithfully,

“S. SNIGGS.

“My boy waits your answer.”

I could not stand this. It would have been perfectly impossible for me to have been ordinarily civil if I had condescended to enter upon anything like a detailed reply to what struck me as the grossest insult that had yet been offered to me—whether intentional or not, I did not then take time to consider—but resolved, at all events, not to be betrayed into an angry correspondence, and, equally averse from maintaining a civil one, I merely desired the servant to send my compliments, and say there was no answer.

I had, however, no sooner sent this message than I felt vexed, inasmuch as I had not given the girls an opportunity of writing to their

father-in-law, an omission, on my part, which I was quite sure would be magnified by Sniggs to the Brandyball into a crime of the first magnitude. I therefore proceeded to the drawing-room where the young ladies were, and informed them that if they wished to write to Montpelier, Mr. Sniggs would forward their communications under his cover.

"I think," said Kate, "Mr. Sniggs *might* have come up himself, considering——"

"He says," replied I, "that he did not wish to break in upon us on a day of mourning."

"It has been no great day of mourning with me," said Kate; "nothing like what it would have been if I had gone to the funeral, and so I shall tell Pappy."

"Then," said I, my patience very rapidly wasting, "why did you not go, Miss Falwasser?"

"Oh!" said Kate, with more candour than wisdom, "I did not choose to go, because I saw I was to be spited; nothing was to be done that I wished; and I am sure I do not know who

was to be studied, as Mrs. Brandyball said, if *I* was not."

"All I ask is," said I, with as much coolness as I could command, "whether you have any thing to write to Montpelier."

"No, Uncle," said Kate, "I shall write nothing; but when I get back I shall say a great deal. I know more about things that are going on than some folks think. I do, and——"

"And so do I, Miss Kate," said I; "therefore I must beg of you not to exhibit this sort of conduct in *my* house."

"In Pappy's house you mean," said Kate, firing up: "dear me! as if I did not know all about *that*! Why, even my maid, Wilkins, knows the whole story."

"Pray," said I, again interrupting her; "let me have no reference to such authorities as the servants, when I am speaking to you upon matters of family interest."

"I am sure," said the angry girl, "I am not of *your* family, and so Mrs. Brandyball has told me and taught me; and as for——"

"Oh, Kate, Kate, dear Kate!" said Jane, "do not go on talking so."

"Talking," said Harriet: "she may talk if she pleases; but, Gilbert, send her back to school in the morning, when I hope an account of her conduct will induce your brother to order her some severe punishment."

"Thank you, my dear," said Kate, with the most impudent look at my poor wife; "but I am not going to be sent anywhere by *you*. When *I* choose to go, and Mr. Sniggs chooses to take me back, I shall go."

"Mr. Sniggs," said Nubley, who had witnessed this scene, struggling with a sort of convulsive effort to stop it, "Mr. Sniggs, my little dear, need not trouble himself about it; *I* will take charge of you and your sister to Bath the day after to-morrow—*little imp deserves to be whipped, and shall be if I prevail*. I cannot to-morrow—*deuce take Thompson!*—but the day after we will make the journey."

"I won't go," said Kate, bursting into tears.

"My little dear," said Nubley, "you shall.

You'll forgive me, Mrs. Gurney—*poor dear soul, I hope I shan't frighten her*—eh?—you'll forgive me; but I have been the friend and partner of Cuthbert Gurney for nearly forty years—eh—don't you see?—*and lost a deuced deal of money by his stupidity*—eh—don't you see?—yes—and have the highest regard for him. I want to go to Bath—*not I, I hate the white-bottomed tea-kettle*—eh—don't you see?—I want to go to Bath—eh?"

"Well," said Kate, looking daggers at him, "then go to Bath; but I——"

"You shall go with me, my little dear—eh—*little devil*," said Nubley. "Where's the use of paying for two sets of horses?—I want to see your Pappy, as you call him—eh—*no relation of her's*—eh—and so I will take all the responsibility; and you may tell Sniggs—very gentlemanly man, my dear—*pill-gilding puppy*—eh—
• that he may write what he has to say; but that you and Jane—eh—*nice, little quiet thing she would be if taken care of here*—eh—don't you see?—will go with me."

"I shan't, Sir," said Kate: "my Pa——"

"Now don't", said Nubley, "don't say you won't, because you will—eh—nothing is so unpleasant to look at, as a young lady in a passion—eh—*except an old one*—what! don't you see?"

"I do not wish to go at all," said Jane, clinging to Harriet.

"Then you may stay and be a beggar," said Kate.

"Kate," said my wife, with as much placidity as I could have hoped to see, "conduct and conversation like these are extremely unbecoming. Mr. Nubley is not only the oldest friend your father-in-law has, but has been, for a great number of years, intimately connected with him in business: surely you do not mean to prefer Mr. Sniggs, who has accidentally become acquainted with us from our living here, to a gentleman whose intimacy has existed with your family for such a length of time. Consider——"

"I do consider," said Kate; "and I am sure

the kindness of Mr. Sniggs to poor dear Tom"—and here a flood of tears by way of grief gave vent to feelings of a very different nature.

"Oh, he is a very good doctorer," said Nubley, "and means to be paid for his pains—eh—*not to speak of the cherry bounce*—eh—don't you see, my dear?—we all know his merits, and I mean to explain them all to your dear parent by proxy—eh—*that's a good joke!*—eh—don't you see? But why we are to waste twice the sum for post-horses in carrying you back to Bath, because you don't like to travel with *me*, I don't understand: as for Jenny, if she likes to stop, she shall, if Mrs. Gurney likes to keep her. I'll make her excuses."

"I *do* like to stop," said Jane, and burst into tears as her sister had just before done, but with this trifling difference, that hers were genuine.

"I am sure, Miss Jane," said Kate, "you must have some very particular reason for liking to stop."

"May-be I have," said Jane, in a tone of irritation and passion which I never had before

observed in her: "but if I have, it is because I love my Aunt and my Uncle, and love quiet, and goodness, and peace."

"Ah!" said Kate, "you must love something else to prefer this dull hole to Bath."

"Whatever I love," said Jane, straining her eyes out of their sockets, "I am not in love with a dancing-master."

The world was at an end; nothing but main force hindered Kate from inflicting summary injustice upon her poor sister, who by this most unexpected denunciation had destroyed at a blow all the secrecy and mystery with which we had invested this curious attachment, and laid open an affair of the most unquestionable delicacy.

"Jane," said I, "don't talk in this way; a joke between yourselves is all very well, but——"

"Oh, Uncle, no," said Jane, "it is no joke. I——"

"Jane, I'll kill you," said Kate, "I will—I'll tear your eyes out—I won't stop here a

moment, that I won't, now I know they know it all: that's the reason my letters—but I won't speak—I won't stop—I will go—I'll drown myself, I will."

And out of the room rushed Kitty.

"Go after her, Harriet," said I; "soothe her—get rid of this joke—for joke it is. Jenny, you should not put your sister into these passions, you know her temper."

Harriet was really alarmed, and ran after the violently impassioned girl.

"I only spoke the truth," said Jane, "and Wilkins will tell you the same."

"A dancing-master!" said Nubley, "why she's a baby—eh—*tum-ti-ty-te-doodly-di—a dancing-master! well, if ever!—oh! if my old woman gets hold of this—eh—what! that little man that lives here, with the red hair and the pumps?*"

"Now," said I to Jane, wishing to get rid of this unfortunate *éclaircissement* as soon as possible, "go after Kate, and be kind to her, and say no more about this absurd thing. I

wish you had not worried her about it—you *shall* stay with us, if you like, dear; but do not say anything more about this ridiculous story; go, there's a love."

"I will do whatever you wish, Uncle," said Jane; "but I don't see why Kate should say that I wanted to stay here for anything but love of you and Aunt. I am very sorry if you are vexed; for, indeed, indeed, I am happier here than I can be anywhere else in the world." And she cried and clung round me, and only left me when by a *douce violence* I practically asserted my wish that she should go to her sister and Harriet.

I looked at Nubley, and I saw two tears roll down his pale furrowed cheeks: he was leaning on the chimney-piece as usual, unconsciously watching them trickling along, and he muttered, "*By heavens, if I am not shot to-morrow, I will settle all this!*—eh"—turning to me, "that's a nice child, Gilbert, if we can keep her from being spoiled. I'll do what I say—I don't care a pice for the apothecary—I'll take Kitty with

me, and with her a character for her Pappy. What's the story about the dancing-master, eh?"

"Oh," said I, "a mere joke, I conclude."

"I don't know," said Nubley, and away went the chin to work; "there must be something in it—eh?—*he knows the whole story, but won't peach—good fellow, good fellow—eh—you don't believe it?*"

"I never believe evil reports till I have very strong grounds," said I; "but what shall I do about Sniggs? I have said there was no answer to his note; but that will not, I think, under the circumstances, be satisfactory to Cuthbert."

"Oh!" said Nubley, "I will settle that; I'll send Galen a billet, not over *doux*, but just to tell him that if he will write his letter to Cuthbert as he proposes, I will save him all farther trouble as to the journey; and he may, to save postage, inform your most quiescent brother, that I shall be with him. Let's see, this is Friday—on Monday with the young ladies—*shan't let him into the secret of not taking Jane—eh—don't you see?—put his nose out of joint—a very*

worthy man, Sniggs—eh—*beast*—that's what I shall do; so, pen and ink—here they are—*suppose my old woman won't be jealous of my travelling with Kate—I'll settle that—eh—have the maid inside—that will do—eh—perhaps that would be worse.* Now, then——”

And so to work went Nubley to give Sniggs his *cong  *, a step he felt himself perfectly authorised to take, and I proceeded in search of Harriet, whom I found in attendance upon our young heroine, who having been hystericised to a proper extent by her excited feelings was in bed, refusing, however, the slightest reconciliation with Jane, and desiring to be left entirely to the care of her favourite Wilkins.

I held a brief communing with my wife, who, equally with myself, regretted the explosion, which had brought to our notice that which we meant never to have seen the light. Our only resource was to treat the matter as one of no kind of importance, and attribute Jane's reprimand to a girlish jest; a jest which, at all events, however, had better not have *  clated*

upon such a day. Our mutual resolution was to take no notice whatever of the allegation, and we hoped that before bed-time the sisters, who slept in the same room, might be so far reconciled, that by our avoiding all recurrence to the matter, they might rest in quiet for the night.

I went back to Nubley, who showed me the letter he had written to Sniggs, which was reasonable, sensible, and just, and (as he did not write down his floating ideas) sufficiently civil: this was dispatched, and we were just entering upon a conversation connected with Cuthbert's position relating to the Gorgon who had so strangely fascinated him, when a gentleman was announced to be in the morning-room, who wished to speak to me.

I told the servant I would be with him immediately, feeling sure that Captain Thompson had seized the very earliest moment—scarcely, it is true, compatible with decency—to send his friend to make some arrangement as to the insult he had received: it certainly was as soon after the melancholy ceremony to which he had so feelingly alluded, when he himself called, as might

be expected; but I attributed this rapidity of movement to an anxious desire to put himself right, which, as I have already said, I felt convinced was the main object of fixing a quarrel upon somebody, and I hastened down to meet the stranger, delighted beyond measure that Nubley—whose mind was not very excursive—was so much occupied in folding and sealing his letter to Sniggs, that he not only did not question the announcement of the servant, but actually did not hear it. So far so good, thought I; and away I went to give the hero the opportunity of throwing down the gauntlet.

When I entered the morning-room—scene of Thompson's late proceeding—I beheld a stout gentlemanly-looking man, evidently just off a journey, enveloped in a comfortable great-coat, who made a very respectful bow as I entered—the which I did not much like, because, in modern chivalry, it is the fashion for a man to be in manner civil to you, proportionably to the seriousness of his determination to shoot you through the head if possible afterwards.

The moment I saw him a thought flashed into my mind, which, strange to say, had never entered it before—most strange, under the circumstances—he would, of course, expect me to name a friend, with whom he could confer upon arrangements and details: as to apologising to Captain Thompson, I should as soon have thought of suffering him to horsewhip me; and I declare that when I found myself *tête-à-tête* and *vis-à-vis* with my visitor, repentance, which in my case generally came too late, filled my mind, that I had not thought of somebody to whom I could apply in such an emergency.

“I beg your pardon, Sir,” said the stranger, opening the parley, “for coming here to-day, understanding that there has been a funeral in the family, but my business admits of no delay.”

“Will you do me the favour to be seated, Sir?” said I.

“No, Sir,” said the strange gentleman, “my business will be short. I believe you know Captain Thompson?”

"I have seen him here a day or two since," said I, "and am therefore prepared for the nature of your visit."

"Mr. Nubley is, I believe, here?" said the strange gentleman.

"He is," said I; "but as I have already apprised Captain Thompson that the whole of the affair is transferred, at my desire, to myself, I alone am responsible, and you will therefore consider me as the principal in the business."

"Well, Sir," said the strange gentleman, "I suppose you have heard some extremely unfavourable reports of the Captain since he has been living here?"

"Oh! dear no," said I; "I have heard nothing against his character—our families have never been on visiting terms; but still—I——"

"I merely mean to ask, Sir," said the stranger, "whether you are able to substantiate any imputation against his character?"

"No," said I, "none that could possibly interfere with my readiness to treat him as a

gentleman ought to be treated, and meet him whenever he chose."

"What I first wanted to know is," said the stranger, "has he given Mr. Nubley satisfaction?"

"There was no necessity for that," said I, "because, in the first place, he called upon Mr. Nubley, and, in the second, I have taken the affair upon myself."

"You see, Sir," said the strange gentleman, "our way of doing business is going at once to the point. I have come down from London, post, in order to be here to-day, for, from the communication which had reached town, it seemed that time pressed——"

"I presume, Sir," said I, "that I am speaking to an officer?"

"Yes, Sir," said the strange gentleman, "you are; and the urgency of the case rendered it necessary that I should be here as early as possible."

"Well, Sir," said I, "I think we may cut this matter short—my line is determined upon—

I am prepared to meet your friend to-morrow morning at any hour you please, for I am resolved that Mr. Nubley shall hear nothing of the affair till it is over."

"There is no occasion, Sir," said the strange gentleman, "for meeting my friend, for I have left him snug at Chittagong Lodge, looking after the ladies."

"Well, but," said I, "surely after what Captain Thompson has done in the matter, he could spare half-an-hour from his nieces and cousins."

"Nieces and cousins!" said the strange gentleman: "why, Lord bless your soul, Sir! they are no more his nieces and cousins than they are yours. *You* know what sort of people they are."

"Sir," said I, "I believe the grounds of our misunderstanding were some inadvertent expressions on the part of my friend Mr. Nubley; but I really profess to know nothing of the ladies, and would rather, if you please, confine myself to the case in point."

"What," said my visitor, "the furniture and the wines?"

‘ Sir,’ said I, “ if you have come here to insult me, and to trifle with my feelings on a day especially and at a season when an outrage of this sort must naturally be more deeply felt, and will be more decidedly resented, say so. I tell you, Sir, that I am ready to meet Captain Thompson at any time and place you will please to appoint, and I will be there with a friend, which probably will cut our business short.”

“ Meet Captain Thompson, Sir !” said my friend ; “ I fancy there is some mistake in this. I would give fifty pounds to meet Captain Thompson, as you call him——”

“ ——I call him, Sir !” said I.

“ Yes, Sir,” said my friend, “ Captain Thompson of Chittagong Lodge, in the parish of Blissfold, county of Southampton, is in London Jimmy Dabbs, *alias* the Honourable Wilmington Skimminggrove, *alias* Bluff Jim, *alias* Teddy the tight one, *alias* etcetera, etcetera.”

“ I am in a dream !” said I.

“ Lord bless you, Sir !” said my visitor ; “ I wanted to see Mr. Nubley about the damage

done to his house—we came down after Dabbs about lots of London swindling—never could find him for the last six months—missed him completely—and now he has got off—somebody has put him up—tipped him the office—and in course we have no right to keep the ladies in custody, but we have taken leave just to beg them to stop for a little, and——”

“ This is most extraordinary !” said I, “ I thought I was speaking to an officer who——”

“ —So you are, Sir,” said my most respectable *friend*, “ to a Bow Street officer, who has been rather thrown out in the chase after Jimmy ; and what I came here for was, to know if Mr. Nubley, the gentleman who let him the house, is aware of all that has happened.”

“ He was there yesterday,” said I.

“ Did he look at his wine-cellars ?” said my friend.

“ There could have been no particular necessity for his doing that,” said I, “ for the cellar-door was walled up.”

“ Never mind,” said my friend in the great-

coat, "the wall has been pulled down since, and, as I believe, there aren't three dozen of drinkable liquor in the whole place."

"This," said I, "alters the whole business. Do me the favour to wait a moment—I'll go and fetch Mr. Nubley. The affair I had taken upon myself was of a totally different nature from this. I have no objection to his being a principal here, although I should have decidedly opposed his standing forward in the other case."

Up-stairs I went—endeavoured as much as possible to enlighten dear Nubley upon the actual state of affairs, and then brought him down to the morning-room, where he found my worthy guest, whose extremely gentlemanly manner and civilized conduct had led me into the error, that I was speaking to a man in a much higher rank in life.

It took but little time to make Nubley understand the extent of his misfortunes: at first his horror was extreme, for through the foggiess of his mind, which uniformly prevailed until he had warmed away the mist, he, on the first blush

of the business, fancied that somebody had procured the interference of the police to stop the hostile meeting for which he had fully prepared himself. But, alas! the chance of meeting Captain Thompson, *alias* Jimmy Dabbs, *alias* the Honourable Wilmington Skimminggrove, *alias* Bluff Jim, *alias* Teddy the tight one, unless at the Old Bailey, was but small.

And oh! to hear Nuble's lamentations over his London Particular Madeira, Gordon Duff and Bean's own, bought by himself in their hospitable mansion, or rather palace, in the Rua das Esmeralda, at Funchal—four pipes, with two quarter pipes to fill up ullage—all gone—his delicious Paxton Port—the entire emptied, carried off in detail, under the darkness of the night, and the Captain gone too—fled—leaving nothing but his baggage behind him, and *that* of a nature not detainable by law. As for the duel, it was a flea-bite to this damage, which was very extensive, and which must have been managed with consummate dexterity by the gentleman who, as a set-off for his wholesale robbery,

had threatened the sufferer with a horse-whipping.

Nubley bore the intelligence, however, manfully, and determined to proceed with the officer to Chittagong, to examine into the particulars of the case : his first stipulation, however, was, that the ladies should be released, accompanied with a promise, that if they had not the means of going, he would pay their passage to town by the first conveyance.

“ A woman,” said Nubley, “ never should suffer for the ill-doings of a man to whom she is attached—eh ?—No—a woman’s heart is always kind—and if once interested—eh ?—clings to the object of her affections through right and wrong ; —not from bad principle, but because he teaches her to believe him right—eh ?—*I have been young myself. — Poor things ! they are pretty.—What will they do now ?—eh ?—don’t you see ?—send them off—let them go before I get there—eh ? I should make a fool of myself, and a crying old man is a stupid sight.*”—Then, unconscious, as usual, of these ejaculations, which the Bow-street

officer "very much applauded," as believing them addressed to himself, the kind-hearted "old man" turned to me, and said—"Now, Gilbert, I can start for Bath in the morning with that young Jezebel; and, Gilbert my boy! I'll see you righted." He squeezed my hand, picked his chin, and said to himself—" *I will, by Jove !*"

I can hardly describe my sensations when I saw Nubley preparing to follow the officer, who, in pursuance of his desire, at all events to remove the unfortunate females out of his sight before he arrived, preceded him. The extraordinary extrication from a very disagreeable affair—the enlightenment as to the Captain's character, to whom he had incautiously let his house—and the sudden advocacy of my case with Cuthbert which he had adopted, seemed really too many happy incidents in my life to occur in one day, and *that* a day the least likely in the whole calendar to produce anything to me and mine but sorrow and lamentation.

When the dear old man—and how I reproached myself with my former distaste of his peculi-

arities, and my then too ready disposition to laugh at his infirmities !—had taken his departure, it was, I confess, something exciting and almost delightful to tell my dear Harriet the whole history of what had occurred. Of course she reproached me not only for exposing myself to the vengeance of Jimmy Dabbs, but for having concealed the circumstances connected with so important an event from her. All these little temporary differences existing more in love than anger, I contrived effectually to soothe, and found that Kate, overcome by excitement, had fallen into a slumber, not, however, before she had written a note to Mr. Sniggs, which her little short-legged minister, Wilkins, had carried down to his house; and that Jane, tired of endeavouring in vain to get forgiven for the rash allusion to the dancing-master, had returned with Harriet to the boudoir, expressing, in the strongest terms, her anxiety to remain where she was.

Mrs. Nubley, during these days of storm, still remained in her own room. A *ci-devant* beauty,

especially a *blonde*, who either forgets the march of time, or does not perceive the advance of age, cannot bear to "show," after a pulling-down of any sort; and a cold, with a tendency to tooth-ach, and the slightest suspicion of a swelled face, kept the dear simpleton—much to my delight—still an inmate of her chamber—of her bed, I believe. Harriet usually devoted two or three of her morning hours to her, and after tea remained with her till she was ready for sleep; but my belief is, that if she had been as brisk and screeching as usual, Nubley's own natural impulses would never have had fair play; for although she neither had the power nor probably the inclination to direct his proceedings, the constant state of feverish irritation in which her absurdities kept him, would have most seriously operated in curdling the milk of human kindness, of which, to my joy, and I admit, to my surprise—I found him full.

It was about half-past three o'clock, when I was somewhat surprised after what had previously occurred, at perceiving Mr. Sniggs

striding along the drive from the Lodge, with a look of seriousness and importance in his face well suited to his vocation and the circumstances of the morning: I heard his ring at the bell—heard his admission into the house: but heard nothing by way of announcement.—I certainly had the curiosity to open my door and look at what was going on, and all I perceived was, that as soon as he had reached the bottom of the staircase, Wilkins, Kate's maid, was ready to receive and conduct him to Kate's room, whence I inferred that she had felt it necessary to summon him to her presence, but whether in his medical capacity, or as her counsellor and secretary, I could not of course decide. I thought it, however, my duty to let Harriet know what was going on—and she accordingly, much against her will—but from a sense of what was due to the girl and herself—proceeded to the apartment.—Nothing I dare say could have been more disagreeable to Kate—or, if truth were known, to Sniggs himself—for he had taken his line and seemed resolved to maintain it.—

Nuble's note had unquestionably disconcerted him—for whatever Miss Kitty's own view of the case might be, Sniggs could by no means abstract her from Ashmead against our will and command, both of which I felt myself justified to enforce under such a sanction as that of Cuthbert's oldest friend and partner.

"I hope," said Harriet, as she entered the room, "that Kitty is not ill enough to require your professional attendance, Mr. Sniggs?"

"No, Ma'am, no," said Sniggs.

—"I'm sure I *am*," said Kate, "I am very ill indeed."

"If I had thought so, my dear," said Harriet, "I should have been too ready to send for Mr. Sniggs——"

—"Thank you," said Kate, "but I was quite able to send for him myself—Pappy put me under his care—and I have a great deal to say to him to say to Pappy——"

—"Then," said Harriet, "I suppose I may leave you?——"

"Why," said Sniggs, with that peculiar screw

of his eyebrows, which indicated a sort of uncertain determination, if such a feeling may be said to exist—"I—really—I am sure you will forgive me, Mrs. Gurney—but I think perhaps—it *would* be better—I know that—eh?—"

—"Oh, I am too glad to leave her in such good hands," said Harriet—"all that I thought was, that she might wish me to be with her."

"I think not," added Sangrado, with an expression of countenance meant to convey the notion that although he was humouring Kitty, he was furthering the interests of the family—"young folks *have* their whims."

Harriet behaved extremely well, and left the apothecary and his patient to themselves with a complacency almost miraculous; her disgust at Kate's conduct, by no means diminished by the airs she had given herself—nor her esteem for Mr. Sniggs considerably increased by the sort of patronising air of protection which he had thought proper to assume as regarded the young lady.

During the period in which the interesting

dialogue between Kitty and her medical or political adviser was in progress, poor dear Nubley had satisfied himself of the entire truth of his having been most extensively swindled by Jimmy Dabbs, alias Captain Thompson, and moreover convinced by ocular demonstration of the absence, without leave, of his wine and sundry others of his moveables; but, strange to say—one *does* meet with oddities—and never existed upon the face of the earth a greater oddity than that very man: his mind—all abroad as it was—had received a new impulse by the sense he entertained of the cruel persecutions which he saw and felt conscious that I was undergoing, and his own loss, and the demolition and deterioration of his property, scarcely seemed to affect him, although at any other time, and if his wife had been well enough to keep him up to a proper pitch of irritation, he would have been in a violent state of excitement—but no—he made only a short stay on the field of waste and destruction—he had, as he said, ordered the gratuitous removal of the ladies to be secured—

and under such really vexatious circumstances, when he came back in less than an hour, seemed to feel rather gratified and certainly very much soothed because the *soi-disant* Captain Thompson had been considerate enough to leave him the house and fixtures, which he could not very well have contrived to carry off.

Upon his return the worthy old gentleman came to Harriet and myself in her *boudoir* before he repaired to his lady-wife's room; Jane, who was excluded from the council holden by Sniggs and Kitty, being with us.

"Well," said he, "I have been what in my early days they would have called 'bamboozled;' I admit it—Thompson was neither military nor naval—nor, Gilbert, as you found, civil. *He! he! that's the best joke I've made for many a day—eh—don't you see?—well—they've stolen my wine—when I say stolen, they have taken it away—my furniture is gone—eh—I won't say too much, or they'll say I was a fool for leaving it—but I don't care—I don't—no—eh*

—I don't—*I care more about you and yours—eh—don't you think so?*"

"You bear your loss with great philosophy," said Harriet.

"Philosophy!" exclaimed Nubley; "to be sure—eh—can't always be wise—*my fault—I admit it—hope they won't tell Mrs. N. I said so—only you know—you need not say—eh—don't you see?—plausible man—what?—good-looking man—eh—pretty girls the nieces, he! he! he!*—I thought the ladies rather suspicious—eh—odd—*Madeline, as he called her, was—he! he!*—but you know that—eh—I don't bother myself about such things—only just to speak—eh—I have got possession of the house again—and so—eh—I'm all right—and besides all *that*, I have other matters to look after—eh?"

At this period a tap at the door—mark of subservient civility—produced the inevitable—except under very peculiar circumstances—"Come in," and lo and behold the once familiar Sniggs stood before us.

Jane instinctively drew nearer to Harriet as he approached.

"I have been talking to Miss Kate," said Galen, "as to the time when she would like me to take her and Miss Jane, back to Bath, but—whether to morrow, or the next day—or——"

"Why," said I, "Kate very recently expressed a wish to stay here for a day or two longer."

"Yes," said Sniggs, "that is the point—she wished to stay here till, as despatches say, we receive further orders."

"All *I* can say," said I, "is, that as long as she chooses to remain here we shall of course be happy in her presence—and——"

——"Why," said the apothecary, "I think she wishes to pass a day or two with *us* at our humble dwelling if you have no objection—and as Mrs. Brandyball has written very kindly to Mrs. Sniggs, I was thinking——"

——"I'll save you all the trouble of thinking, Sir," said Nubley, "and of acting upon this point—I mean to take Miss Falwasser back to Bath with *me* to-morrow—so you may spare

yourself any further pains—*done him there*—eh—don't you see?—I have some very important matters to talk over with her father-in-law, who is my oldest friend as I think you by this time in all probability know—so if you have anything to send—a *bill I suppose*—eh—don't you see?—you can send it by me.”

“Sir,” said Sniggs, somewhat indignantly, “I really was not prepared for this curious repulse—I have been entrusted——”

——“Pooh, pooh!” said Nubley, “never mind that—you are a deucedly agreeable fellow and full of fun and all that—and I like you—*umph!*—*that is*—but my poor friend Cuthbert Gurney is a mere baby—a little baby in leading strings—he wants looking after—eh?”

“I am sure,” said Sniggs, “during Mr. Cuthbert Gurney’s residence here I paid every attention to him, of which, as far as I am able to form a judgment, he is quite conscious—and as to the poor dear boy who is gone——”

“Yes,” said Nubley, making a face which the illustrious Liston could scarcely emulate, “I

know—*two bottles of cherry-bounce*—eh—I know you did—however, Sir, I must be permitted to act; write what you please to Mr. Gurney, and if you please tell him what I propose to do, but you will permit me to say that the young lady goes with *me*, and goes to-morrow—eh—don't you see?—*That's a finisher for him*—eh?"

"Of course, Sir," said Sniggs, evidently startled, "I can have no right to interfere——"

——"I know you haven't," said Nubley, "therefore don't—eh—*that's plain sense anyhow*; I am going to my old friend and partner, and, as I have already told you, to talk of matters of great importance, and I shall take back his daughter-in-law."

"Daughters-in-law, I presume?" said Sniggs.

"You *do* presume, Sir!" said Nubley; "eh—*that's not so bad*—eh—don't you see? for I mean to take but one—Jenny shall stop here; we will save *her* at all events."

"Am I to write this, Sir?" said Sniggs.

"You may write what you please," replied Nubley; "I never discovered what you had to write about at all—eh—don't you see? but I have resolved upon my course, and shall take it: I care nothing for one man more than another; I made Cuthbert Gurney's fortune, and I hope to prevent his marring it; you may do what you please, but *I* take back the girl—eh?—*now he knows my mind.*"

"I was not aware," said Sniggs, evidently *cowed* by Nubley's extraordinary animation, "that your connexion with Mr. Cuthbert was so peculiar."

"I tell you what it is, Sir," said Nubley; "it is so peculiar as this, that I am resolved, if I can help it, that the produce of a long life spent in a hot climate shan't be wasted upon unworthy objects; he is surrounded by sycophants and blood-suckers; he is a mere child—a sleepy child; eh—don't you see? and I am off to-morrow to wake him if I can, and show him his state and condition, and rescue him from the

rapacious wretches who are about him; now there, that's it—don't you see, Sir? *Tip't it him there, I think—eh?*”

“Of course,” said Sniggs, “under such circumstances, I have nothing to do but submit to your directions, Sir, I shall write my own statement to him.”

“Write,” said Nubley, “as I said before, what you please; but I know what I know; small blame to you to make friends with Cuthbert—but in *me* he has a friend ready made; and so you write to-night, and I'll go to-morrow—that's all—and don't mention the cherry-brandy. *Let him put that in his pipe and smoke it—eh—don't you see?*”

“I see, Sir,” said Sniggs, “that a very unfavourable feeling has been excited against me here, and I shall certainly not intrude any longer; I did not expect such treatment in this house.”

“Didn't you, Mr. Sniggs?” said Harriet—
“that seems very odd!”

“I know, Ma'am,” said Sniggs, “I have

been the victim of prejudice from the beginning ; Mrs. Wells, I—know—eh ?”

“ My dear Mr. Sniggs,” said I, “ do not let us try back upon old grievances ; the whole of this question resolves itself into this, whether you should incur a certain degree of expense, and take a certain degree of trouble to convey Kitty Falwasser to Bath on the same day, or at least, within a day or two of that on which Nubley is upon other business going to the same house.”

“ That,” said Sniggs, gathering up his hat and cloak and stick, “ is all reasonable enough—but having been commissioned, delegated, directed——”

“ There, there, Mr. Sniggs,” said Nubley, “ that is all reasonable enough too—make out your bill—and I am sure Cuthbert will pay every farthing of it, and quite as much more as will compensate for all your trouble ; but do not try to interfere in family matters, Mr. Sniggs—eh—don’t you see ? we can manage all those without what they call extrinsic aid,

Mr. Sniggs—eh—*that's a settler*—eh—don't you see?"

"I do, Sir," said Sniggs, "and I only regret that my constant endeavours to be useful here have been so ill-appreciated. I certainly never expected to hear such language in a house in which I have always been welcomed and well received; but the truth is, that the best intentions are liable to perversion, and—so—I—wish you a very good afternoon."

Saying which Sniggs rose to depart—I felt vexed and annoyed at the whole scene; but I could neither check Nubley, nor indeed impeach the character of his reproaches, which I feared were but too well founded—still I hate to give pain; I had long seen through Sniggs's duplicity—but then, what imperfect creatures we mortals are, and how earnestly throughout the world does every man of the world play his own game!

Sniggs bowed to Harriet, now formally, of course, in consequence of her "last words;" and

to Nubley—I rang the bell—shook hands with him at the door——

“ Tell Cuthbert to expect me to-morrow evening, if you please,” cried Nubley ; “ *that’s another settler—eh—don’t you see ?*”

Sniggs heard, but did not answer—I went out on the stairs with him—he shook his head unconsciously, and not thinking he was observed—we parted.

I lay awake half the night worrying myself with this affair.—Sniggs might have been sly—he might have been self-interested—he might have been deceitful—but we had parted often in Ashmead——

“ And never so before.”

And then there came the reflection that he *might* have meant well—and then the recollection that he lived by the exercise of his profession—and that perhaps it was doing him a serious injury to interfere with his reasonable profits—a thousand thoughts all tending thitherwise agitated and worried me. I could not but be

pleased with the line Nubley had taken ; still, the notion that the good-humoured Sniggs and I had separated so differently from our usual mode of our taking leave of each other, made me very, very uncomfortable indeed.

CHAPTER II.

MY sensations with regard to a man by whom I had been frequently amused, and even instructed, in whose society I had felt much pleasure, and for whom I had begun to feel an interest and friendship, even in opposition to the prejudices of Mrs. Wells, who disregarded his private accomplishments as much as she undervalued his professional character, and who, with a prescience and pertinacity peculiarly feminine, used constantly to say to me, "Well—wait, only wait and see—some day you will find him out:" were anything but comfortable or satisfactory. The consciousness that the day of discovery had actually arrived did not at all relieve my mind;

nor was the triumphant fulfilment of my mother-in-law's prediction at all likely to conduce to my tranquillity, if I went the whole length of discarding him entirely—a measure upon which, however, I had as yet by no means come to a determination.

In the midst of all these domestic proceedings, I was sorry to see that Fanny Wells had grown grave and silent, and was looking pale and unhappy: I could hardly attribute the alteration which I perceived, to the unhandsome defection of her ungracious Lieutenant, and yet I could discover no other probable cause for the change. Her maid, Kerridge, it seemed, was not much more lively than her mistress, for Tom Lazenby had, after all that he had promised, agreed to remain with Merman and his lady until he could get “suited;” Merman having enjoined him to secrecy with regard to everything that had occurred at Blissfold.

It appeared—although how I became acquainted with facts and circumstances about which I never made any inquiry I shall leave to

my married readers to surmise—that Fanny, from having first indignantly repelled the idea of reading Lazenby's letter to Kerridge, had brought herself, upon the occasion of a second offer of the "sight" of another epistle from him, to accept the proffered edification at the hands of her maid, inasmuch as she told her mistress that it contained a correct account of the state of affairs, and was, moreover, very curious in several other particulars.

Now, really and truly, Fanny Wells's accession to Sally Kerridge's proposition was not the result of mere idle curiosity, or an unladylike desire to pry into the concerns of other people—it was based upon an interest of which a girl of feeling never can divest herself for one with whom she has long been associated upon terms of that kind of intimacy which had been naturally considered conducive to ulterior objects, the accomplishment of which would necessarily have linked the fate of their after-life together.

It was true that Merman had shown himself heartless and mercenary, but certainly he had

secured a considerable portion of Fanny's heart before his conduct had become so unequivocally exceptionable; and as many a woman can testify, it takes a great deal more pain and trouble to get rid of a once cherished feeling of such a nature as Merman had in the earlier part of their acquaintance inspired, than men imagine. Under the sanction of her father, she had been accustomed to look upon Merman as her future husband; as the man with whom she was to pass her days, and her object then had been to accommodate her modes of thinking to his views, until at length she began to fancy all that he said was just and wise, and that his opinions upon all subjects were to be her guides and governors. It is very difficult—so completely are we creatures of habit—to get rid of the effects of this kind of influence to which the mind and feelings have been trained; and although Fanny regarded his recent conduct with all the indignation it so richly and justly deserved, still she could not forget that it had not been always so, and that he had been acted

upon by a power which, in a worldly point of view, he had been unable to withstand. In fact, she still cared enough for him, for what he *had been* in other days, to be anxious to know what he was doing *now*, and whether all he *had* done had, in fact, secured him the happiness in search of which he had deserted her.

This feeling was a weakness with which she could not bring herself to trust her father, who had so paternally interposed upon the former occasion, and therefore it was, that she availed herself of Sally Kerridge's offer to permit her to read *her* letter from Thomas, which was couched in the following terms:—

“ *Murrel Green, Thursday.*

“ DEAR SARAH,

“ I should not wonder if you wasn't a little surprised at neither seeing nor hearing from me before this as I calculate you also will be at reading the date of this hepistol. The truth is, that the Captain whose stay in England will be very short says to me, just as I was coming off to you the night after I wrote, ‘ La-

zenby' says he 'where do you go when you leave me?' So I contumaciously expressed myself in these identical words, 'Why Sir' says I in a masculine manner, 'I am going to Blissfold.' Whereupon he observed to me that he supposed I had got what the French calls a *chair ah me* there, and that I was likely to settle myself in the neighbourhood—so then I expostulated with him and mentioned my notion of setting up in the general line, and he laughed and said that he hoped to do that himself some day, and was quite factious with me upon the toepick, which after his manner the night before, rather constaminated me as Goldfinch says in Ben Johnson's Beggars Opera, whereupon he says looking at me in his droll way, 'Tom' says he 'I shan't be long in London—hadn't you better go up with me and Mrs. M. when we are married and stop with us till we go'—for mind you, he is going to take her out with him to share the toils of the champain—and this was the very first of his directly insinuating that the thing was all settled—so I hesitates a little—and thinking

of you my dear Sarah—I says says I ‘Sir will you give me an hour to preponderate?’—‘To be sure I will’ says the Captain. Well I begins to think, and I calculated I might make a few pounds by stopping—and paying his bills—and managing his luggage and all *that*, before he went. So I says to Susan—she as I wrote about in my last—‘If you was *me*,’ says I, ‘what would you do in this conundrum?’ ‘Why’ says Susan ‘if you ask me *my* advice if I was *you* I’d stay and go with the Captain.’ So I considers a bit more and I says to her ‘I don’t much like Missus as is to be.’ ‘Nor I’ said Susan ‘although I have knowed her longer than you—but for all *that* I’m going as her maid—only to stay till they leave England for good.’ ‘Why’ says I, having heard her opinion of the future Mrs. Merman, and how Mrs. Gibson had gone away entirely excavated by the levity of her mistresses behaviour, ‘I had no notion you would do such a thing.’

“So Susan says to me, ‘Lazenby,’ says she—she calls me Lazenby, for we are quite like

brother and sister now—‘my old Missus wishes it—and she hints something about remembering me hereafter; and so what is it, says Susan—‘in these days folks don’t stick at trifles, and sure if Miss Millicent is good enough to be Captain Merman’s wife, she is good enough to be my Missus.’

“That seemed remarkably judicial to my comprehension and so thinking what was good for Susan could not be interrogatory to me, up I goes to the Captain and agrees to stay with him, as I tell you till he bids a Jew to his native land, at which perriod dear Sarah I hope to return to you like the good bee who, as Pope says in ‘The Deserted Village’—

‘Behaves in Bee-hives as Be-hoves him,’

and bring you an affectionate art and I should say upwards of seven pounds fourteen shillings in hard cash by way of hunney.

“Susan says she should like to know you, she is so much indisposed towards you by my inscription of you, and I should like you to be

friends, which perhaps may be, some of these days if she comes back to that part of the country. She would be uncommon nice company for both of us, she is so candied and philanthropic, and it is a great thing for a married couple to have such a friend.

“ I don’t know whether you have ever been in this quarter of the world, although as I don’t think you could well have got to Blissfold by any other road from London, pr’aps you have; it is very wild and romantic, with a bit of a green before the door, upon which there are geese, ducks, enseterar; and Susan and I am going to take a walk and we shall carry this letter ourselves to Artley Row where is the Post-office, because as I have promised the Captain not to say anything one way or the other, I thought if he saw a letter redressed to the Passonage, he might inspect something; so Susan and I agreed it would be better to go out in the dusk as if miscellaneously and slip it in unbeknown to any body, while Master and Missus is enjoying their *teat a teat* after dinner.

We go on to the metropolis in the morning, and Susan and I go outside in the rumble tumble, for Miss Pennefather has lent us the charriot, which I suppose I shall have to bring back, which as I cannot do without horses will be a very pretty incursion. I don't in course know how long the Captain will be before he goes, so do not fret.

“ I have got your wach, which does not keep Tim well, but I never look at it without thinking of you. Susan says it wants to have new hands put to it, and I shall give it to a watchmaker in town to riggle at it spontaneously on my arrival.

“ The Captain and his mate seem very happy which also makes me think of you, Sarah dear; she certainly is no beauty to my taste, she is a good deal in the Ottomy line and I should say not easily pleased, but in course as yet it all goes uncommon comfortable; for as O'Keefe says in his comical farce of ' Love for Love :—'

' To fools a curse, to those a lasting boon,
What wisely spends the hunney moon.'

“ I hope poor Miss Fanny don't take on about the loss of Master ; I'm sure if I was she and knew that he left me for the sake of Malooney's money I should care no more about him than nothing at all—true love loves for itself a loan—don't it, dear Sarah ? Oh Sarah ! Susan and I had some hot sassages and mashed potatoes for dinner to-day, and I did so think of you, and I said so—and Susan says to me, says she, ‘ Does your Sarah love sassages ? ’ so I said, says I, ‘ yes—where's the girl of taste as doesn't'—and so she says again, ‘ then I wish she was here, ’—and we both laughed like bogies. So *that* shows we don't forget you.

“ As to Miss Fanny there is one thing—which if you have an opportunity upon the sly, you may incoherently hint—which may be p'rhaps a considerable revelation of her despondency—if she still cares for Master—which is this—the officer which is to have the recruiting party in place of him, as Rattan told me before I came away, is taller and better-looking than Master and quite the gentleman—p'raps if you

tell Miss Fanny that, it will controvert her regret and make her easy—I know enough of the seck, Sarah, to know that it is with females as it is with fighters—to use the words of Young in his ‘Abelard and Eloisa’—

‘One down, t’other come on.’

“And so perhaps Miss Fanny may make up her mind to the gentleman which will relieve my master—I am sure I hope she may, for she is I am sure constipated to make any man happy in that way.

“Well Sarah dear I must now say good bye—or else, Tim flies so fast, Susan and I may be mist. I haven’t room to tell you all about Master’s wedding, which was all done with as little ceremony as possible, and as Susan says there was not a minnit to be lost, but I will explain all particulars when I come back to you which will not be long first. So squeeze my keeping you in expence for these few days for I was so busy I could not write before, but

Susan says she is sure you will forgive me, and so I think you will.

“ I say, dear Sarah in exclusion I hope that you have not been speaking to William Waggle, the baker’s young youth, because as I am absent, it might give some grounds for calomel—Mrs. Hodgson and those two Spinkeses her sisters is always a-watching—I’m not a bit jellies myself—no, I scorn the ‘green hided malster,’ as Morton says in his ‘New Way to Pay old Debts’—but I know the world—I know what the old Tabbies say, and how they skirtinize every individil thing which relates to us—as I says to Susan—the eyes of the hole world is on us two—you and me—and therefore Sarah dear, mind what you do, and do not encourage any of them to walk with you in an evening—’specially Bill, inasmuch as the whiteness of his jacket would make the roundcounter the more evident to the Hargooses of the place.

“ A jew Sarah—the next you will hear from me will be in London—most probably at the

Whiteoss Cellar in Pickadilly, or the Golden Cross Charing Cross, which the Captain thinks the quietest spots to fix upon—rely upon my righting you the minute I have time—I told Rattan that I was going back to Blissfold, so he will have had no message for you, besides, I don't want you to have any miliary connexions during my abstinence—therefore please to remember me in your art, as I do you in mine, and if you will, do me the fever to pay Mrs. Jukes three and ninepence which I owe her for washing my things, which I will repay you when we meet—best love, in which Susan though she does not know you, joins with equal sincerity—take care of yourself dear Sarah, and mind about the baker.

“Yours always true till death,

“THOMAS LAZENBY.”

A hasty perusal of this letter raised in Fanny's mind a sort of suspicion that Lazenby was about to perform second to his amiable master in the fullest extent of the word; and

although poor simple Sally Kerridge saw nothing in its contents except kindness and affection on the part of Tom, and of sympathy and friendship on that of Susan, the better educated young lady felt convinced in her own mind that her maid was destined, in a lower scale but in an equal degree, to suffer very much the same sort of treatment which she herself had undergone. It was, however, no part of her inclination to awaken any disagreeable suspicions in the mind of her *soubrette*, and therefore having assured herself of the irrevocable nature of Merman's connexion with the lady of his Aunt's choice, she returned the epistle to its right owner, resolved to conquer, if possible, that gnawing anxiety which now never left her free from pain; but for which, if she had been seriously asked, she could not have assigned any real cause. It was a nervousness—a regret for what was past—a dread of something to come; and yet was neither one nor the other to be really cared for. These are indescribable feelings by which all of us, more or less, are

affected:—the blow has been given, and the wound rankles, and grief and apprehension hang over us. Why? is another question:—Fanny was unhappy, and I knew she was——

However, all this, *par parenthèse*, for there are other family matters which press more upon us at the moment: still I cannot help noticing what appears to me a combination of ills—a collection of clouds rising on the horizon, which I cannot, with all my sanguine readiness to think favourably of coming events, contemplate without alarm and apprehension. I have, as my own position goes, grown unpopular, for my conduct towards poor Tom. I have caused, or at any rate been the cause, of converting Sniggs, my *once* devoted and dependent friend, into an ardent and inveterate enemy. I am separated from my brother, hated by his favourite daughter-in-law, laughed at by Mrs. Wells, and only commiserated and vindicated by the man whom I had singled out for my most especial dislike and ridicule. All this is very uncomfortable:—whenever my mind is filled with these thoughts

I recur to my wish that I had missed Cuthbert at Gosport, the night of his arrival:—to be sure, if I had, I should in all human possibility not have been married to Harriet; and then I should not have been a happy husband, and a father, and——

There is no use in again pursuing this train of thinking, nor in again going over the consideration of the established fact, that all great matters turn upon little incidents. I admit that at this period of my existence I am unhappy:—I find myself involved in a thousand difficulties, not one of which has been of my own seeking. Give me Harriet and my baby, and the smallest cottage that could cover us, and such a one as I could myself afford, and we should, I know we should, be happy: but, no; I find myself mixed up with people and affairs with whom and with which I have in point of fact, no earthly concern. Still, here I am, and being so placed, I must fight my way through the evils which assail me as well as I can.

In the morning succeeding Sniggs's uncom-

fortable departure from Ashmead, Nubley was awake and stirring before any of the family party, and in the first instance, proceeded to Chittagong Lodge, which, in point of fact, was in the possession of the police-officers, who, having suffered the ladies to go, had remained there for the night, in the hope—utterly vain it must be confessed—that they might gain some tidings of the object of their search : all *that*, however, was at an end. The *soi-disant* captain had vanished entirely ; and therefore Nubley, now that Tom's funeral was over, took the precaution of appointing the upholsterer, undertaker, &c. &c., of Blissfold, to meet him at the Lodge, in order to put somebody in charge of the premises, and to make out a general inventory of the furniture and effects ; not so much with the view of ascertaining what he actually possessed, as to establish the fact of what he had lost, and thus the dear little absent man, to whom, on account of his strange abstracted manner I had given very little credit for business-like habits, or even an ordinary

share of intellectuality, proved himself exactly the reverse of my brother, his late partner, Cuthbert, and while he maintained his original purpose of starting for Bath at noon with his fair charge, I found him before breakfast arranging and settling all his own business in a matter in which, as I heard from Harriet, he never would have been involved, if it had not been that Mrs. Nubley declared Captain Thompson one of the most charming persons in the world, he having made her believe that his father was the greatest possible friend of one of her aunts, and expressed his delight at having been so fortunate as to fall in accidentally with a lady of whom he had heard his dear relation speak in such extraordinary high terms.

Nubley, however, bore all his mishaps without murmuring, for this reason:—if he had permitted himself to complain, it would have been a practical admission that he had yielded to the suggestions of his wife; a course of proceeding which not only in what he said aloud, but what he thought aloud, he uniformly depre-

cated. Having, however, at some particular moment of extreme good-nature submitted his own opinions to her judgment, he thought the best thing he could do was neither to proclaim himself defeated, nor reproach her with being the cause of his loss. So, up he got, and out he went; and when he came back to the breakfast-room, he informed me that the police had withdrawn themselves—that he had obtained quiet possession of the house—and that beyond the loss of rent, wine, and “sundry unregarded trifles,” he thought he should not suffer more than the cost of cleaning the premises, and, perhaps, new-papering one or two of the rooms; and all the evils and mischiefs resulting from the misconduct of the Thompsons he balanced somewhat satisfactorily for himself by observing “that an empty house was much better than a bad tenant;” it being evident to me, as I have already stated, that his calmness and philosophy upon the occasion were mainly attributable to the excitement of his feelings upon other points

more nearly connected with myself and my interests ; and the first distinct clear order which he gave to his servant when he entered the hall, was delivered in these words :—

“ The horses are to be here at one o’clock Thomas—not a minute later !”

Kate heard this mandate, and made a face which she did not think I saw, but which seemed in its expression to indicate—

“ Then you may go by yourself, you old monster.”

It was all in vain, for it was perfectly evident that Nubleys mind was made up, and that what Mrs. Nubleys called his obstinacy in small matters, but which became on more important points really firmness, was not to be shaken either by the flippancy of Sniggs or the pertness of Miss Falwasser. In fact, Miss Falwasser appeared perfectly aware of the extent of her influence over the old gentleman, and therefore contented herself by exhibiting her dissatisfaction by signs and tokens, which, however, in most instances,

she took especial care should not be seen by the person whose contravention of her wishes had excited them.

Youth is in general so candid, so ingenuous, and so little skilled in what are called the "ways of the world," that I could scarcely believe the evidence of my senses while watching the proceedings of this mere child. Four-and-twenty hours before Nubley's announcement of his determination to take her with him to Bath, she had treated him, and his observations and remarks, not only with neglect, but contempt: she regarded him as a silly old man, about whom nobody cared, and seemed to enjoy the cheateries of the Thompson faction as a vastly good joke played off upon a simpleton; while Mrs. Nubley, who had in vain endeavoured to prepossess the youthful beauty in her favour, was an object of her undisguised ridicule; but from the moment that Nubley, in giving his reasons for enforcing her return with *him*, had stated the nature and character of his influence over Cuthbert, and she had heard *him*, whom she had previously despised,

censuring, and declaring his determination to alter the conduct of "Pappy," whose will she naturally looked upon as law, and whose decrees she held to be as immutable as the laws of what Mr. Lazenby would have called "the Maids and Parsons," she seemed entirely to change her line of behaviour towards him; and although she appeared sulky and cross, and although his mandates certainly caused the mummeries which I have just noticed, still her antics were played off with the greatest care that he should not detect them, and what was at first an obstinate determination to resist the journey, sank into a reluctant consent to do what dear Pappy's dear old friend thought best.

The time wore on, and I perceived a certain whispering in progress between Miss Kitty and her maid, who had been to the "shop" to make some purchases, and I overheard, accidentally, Kitty in reply to something her *aide* had said, exclaim in a louder tone than perhaps she was aware of, "No answer!—What! was he at home, and no answer?" A mumbling noise

succeeded this burst, and I was left in doubt whether the young lady's last appeal had been vainly made to the doctor or the dancing-master, for I had had my suspicions with regard to a new attack upon the latter, in spite of Kate's avowed denunciation of him—to use her own elegant phraseology—as a spooney.

When the carriage drew up to the door, and Nubley, after a brief but animated conversation, all tending to confirm me not only in the sincerity, but the value of his exertions in my behalf, and I saw him and Miss Falwasser with her beautiful countenance suffused with tears, driven from the gates, I felt a relief much like what a “general dealer,” as the term goes, must experience when he beholds the departure of a barrel of gunpowder from his premises which do not afford any secure and suitable magazine for its reception, to which I had likened the sweet combustible young lady when she first arrived at Ashmead; and, as I went upstairs and met Harriet on the landing-place, watching the progress

of the departing travellers, I could not help exclaiming, although Jane was by—

“ Well, thank our stars she is gone !”

Harriet gave me a look, and so did Jane. Harriet’s was to warn me that Jane was present, and Jane’s was to announce to me that she cordially assented to my congratulations.

It is not worth while to record the various little circumstances and anecdotes by which Jane, when she felt herself quite safe from the persecutions of her elder sister, corroborated all our suspicions, and substantiated all our apprehensions with regard to the systematic exercise of Mrs. Brandyball’s influence over Cuthbert during the brief period of his having actually been in her custody, for I could consider it little else, nor regard him in any other light than an invalid placed under the charge of an ill-principled nurse. It seemed, however, that the school was to be abandoned altogether. Kitty had hinted as much, or rather she had put the case hypothetically ; but, in point of fact, this relinquishment

had been already so far carried into effect, that the blue board upon which "Montpelier Seminary for Young Ladies" had heretofore glittered in golden letters, had been removed, and that the name of Mrs. Brandyball alone appeared upon the gate. This and one or two other particulars, which Jane readily and even anxiously imparted to us, satisfied both Harriet and myself, that even if Nubley should be in time to avert the calamity which threatened us, there was not a moment to spare.

It may naturally be supposed that the period of the old gentleman's absence was one of no small anxiety to us; nor were we permitted to enjoy our suspense with the calmness which might have moderated its acuteness. It must be recollected that, during the expedition of our kind emissary, we had to cheer, soothe, and entertain his lady, who, having recovered in a certain degree from her late indisposition, appeared to have received a new power of tormenting, from the temporary repose she had experienced. Anxiety about her spouse, and her nervous solicitude

about various favourite articles of furniture at Chittagong, imprecations upon the heads of all the Thompsons, criminations of the police for not apprehending the whole "gang" of them, and sending them all to Botany Bay without conviction or even trial, formed the general theme of her conversation, to which we were obliged to be constantly assenting, and in which she contrived to indulge at the rate and in the tone of a cock parrot in the highest possible health and spirits.

"Lauk, my dear, Mr. Nubley is such a man—he! he! he!—to think of going to let Chittagong to a family of cheats, without ever enquiring about what they were, or who they were. Ah, well! Men, are the worst bargainers in the world; the pretty faces of those saucy misses did it, I have no doubt. I am sure I ought not to say so—dear me, no—he! he! he!—Mr. Nubley is as kind a husband as any in England, only he is led away. I am sure I hope nothing will happen to him, poor dear!—no overturn or break down; and then, my dear Mrs. Gurney, that beautiful rosewood work-table, with the or-

molu edging and the crimson bag, all spotted and dotted, and the dinner-table all white with the heat of the dishes. Lauk, Mr. Gurney—he! he! he!—you are such a man, I declare, if you arn't laughing at me."

I most positively denied the fact, because it was not so, but I believe in vain, for our guest was one of those who, like Scrub in the play, fancied that everybody who laughed, was laughing at *her*.

Still we managed remarkably well. Harriet and she visited Chittagong; and Harriet, with her whole heart and mind at Montpelier, endeavoured to appear interested in the objects which interested her friend and companion in her first excursion after her confinement; and to be sure, the mischief the wretched people had done was enough to have provoked a much less irascible person than Mrs. Nubley.

The third day would bring us intelligence from Bath. "Lauk, my dear, do you think Mr. N. will write? He! he! he!—he is such a man!" screamed Mrs. Nubley.

"Yes," said I, "I am sure he will—he will not only be anxious to give *you* tidings of himself, but to send *me* news of Cuthbert."

"Ah!" said his lady, "that is, if he does not forget it."

He did not forget it, for Mrs. Nubley received on the third morning a letter of which I knew not the purport, and I the following one, the contents of which were by no means satisfactory. I confess, however, that I was infinitely less surprised than distressed at the intelligence they conveyed. Here we have it:—

"White Hart, Bath,

— —, 18—.

"DEAR GILBERT,

"I reached Montpelier about an hour later than I proposed, and did not get there till between eight and nine. My young companion appeared at first sulky, then sleepy, and then sick, and said she must travel outside; this—don't you see?—was a puzzler; there was only room for two in the rumble. If I had her maid in—don't you see—that would have been odd?

and if I sent *her* into the rumble with her maid, I must have had *my* man inside—this worried me. I explained the difficulty, and so at last she agreed to stay where she was, if I had one of the glasses down—which, in course, I had, and have thereupon got an uncommonly bad tooth-ache.

“ We went on very agreeable—the young lady and I—for we did not say much ; only now and then she began to grieve for Tommy, and cry about him a little. I told her it was very natural she should regret his loss, although I thought to myself by your account of him he could be no great loss to anybody—only in course, that did not escape me, any more than what I felt concerning her general conduct, and that of the old Jezebel at Montpelier. We stopped at Warminster, and had a broiled fowl and mushroom-sauce, together with potatoes and some cold boiled beef, which I relished much—it was almost as good as hump, but you can’t judge of the difference, because humps when they come home are never satisfactory—a mutton cutlet, not nice—an apple tart, with cream ; pint of Ma-

deira, and one glass of brandy : the man and the maid refreshing also, for it must have been cold outside, although company makes comfort anywhere. Well, then, on we went, and Kate was in better spirits, and talked more, and seemed as if she thought I was not quite so great a brute as she had taken me for, and told me that she thought Pappy was very fond of dear B.B., which was her facetious abbreviation of Mrs. Brandyball's name; and so all went on very well, and it grew dark, and as I did not know how to find my way to Montpelier, when we got to Midford I begged her to tell me what directions were to be given to the post-boy; and within a mile of Bath—and, as it turned out, within half a mile of Montpelier—he received his instructions, and with very little haggling and boggling we were driven to the gate.

“ ‘ Dear Montpelier ! ’ exclaimed Kitty, as the bell was rung by the servant—The dogs began to bark—‘ dear Popsy ! ’ cried Kitty—‘ dear Towzer !—dear Nep !—I know your voices.’ And when the gate was opened, ‘ Dear bow-

window!—dear Pappy!’ all in ecstasies, which did not startle me, because I remember when my poor wife used to talk in the same way; so I did not say a word, but I thought to myself, ‘stupid chit! ridiculous creature!’ and much more, which in course I never uttered; but still I thought Kitty snapped me up as she got out of the carriage, and ran through the hall to the room, where she knew she should find Cuthbert installed, inasmuch as a door-way has been made through the wall of Montpelier House into the adjoining cottage which he inhabits.

“And then there was a screaming and a sort of crowing, and a kind of rapture, and a general noise accompanying the reception, which no doubt made my post-boy fancy that I had arrived at my home, and his duty was done. I therefore told my man to desire him to wait and take me into Bath, and proceeded by slower steps towards the presence of my friend Cuthbert.

“I observed that the welcome greetings of Miss Kitty suddenly subsided into silence as I

approached, and when, without further invitation than was offered by open doors, and a light upon a table in an ante-room, I adopted the natural fashion of following my nose, and found myself in the presence of my old friend and partner, I did not think the expression of his countenance was such as to make me imagine my visit a particularly welcome one; nor could I doubt, by that which characterised the not over delicate features of Mrs. Brandyball, that that respectable lady most devoutly wished me in a climate considerably hotter than Calcutta, from

“Whose *burn* no traveller returns.”

Forgive my being jocose, but I feel so happy that I was not provoked to express my detestation of her character and conduct to her face, that now I have got to my home—as I call my inn—and am set down to write, I cannot help being in some sort facetious.

“Well—when I went in—there was Cuthbert almost buried in a huge armed-chair—his legs up on an ottoman-sort of thing before him—Mrs. Brandyball’s seat, which she had quitted

upon our approach, being close to his left shoulder. On the table before him was a small round board, stuck full of little ivory pegs, all ready for playing the game of fox and goose—two or three books—some needles used for knitting, or netting, or knotting, or what not—a parcel of something that looked to me very like weekly bills—and a glass of sangaree or some other mixture which he seemed to have scarcely tasted—and these, with an inkstand, and some writing-paper, under which lay a cheque-book, furnished out the board at which, as it seemed, under due surveillance, he was permitted to preside.

“When I advanced, Kitty had quitted his neck, which she had embraced with a fervour ill suited to his personal powers, however acceptable it might have been to his mental perceptions, and had transferred her ardent acknowledgments to her dear B.B., who appeared profusely lavish in her welcome home to the darling of her heart; of course, Jane was the next subject of inquiry, and as Kitty

seemed at a loss to account for her absence, I felt it right to put that matter at rest as speedily as possible, by explaining her wish to stay with you and Harriet; at the termination of which explanation I saw Kitty and Mrs. Brandyball exchange looks; that of the latter lady being particularly distinguished by the unusual exhibition in good society, of a 'wink:' of course I did not let them know that I had seen this interchange of signals, and Mrs. Brandyball put me quite at my ease, by observing that 'where the inherent disposition of the mind unequivocally conduces to the encouragement of sympathetic affection, it would be absolutely inhuman to interpose any restrictive regulations which might even remotely tend to deteriorate from the genuineness of the inclination, or by compulsory measures endeavour to control the beautiful single-mindedness of juvenile prepossessions.' I thought to myself, this is all fudge!—in course I did not say so—but I didn't like the woman a bit the more for all her flummery.

"Cuthbert did not seem much to care about

Jane's staying behind ; whether he was soothed by this superficial speech of the lady, or whether Kate's acknowledged disregard for her, had lowered her in his esteem, I don't pretend to say ; all I know is, that after Kate had run to her room to "take off her things," she returned to Cuthbert, and again throwing her arm round his neck, did nothing but kiss him and say, ' Poor Pappy ! dear Pappy !'

" ' I have got,' said he, as if recollecting something not at all apropos to the visit, ' a letter here from Mr. Sniggs—eh ?—and he tells me—Mrs. Brandyball—what does he tell me ?—about my poor Tom's funeral. It is a sad business.'

" ' My dear Cuthbert,' said I, ' the surprise of seeing me——'

" ' Mr. Gurney was not in the least surprised, Sir,' said Mrs. Brandyball, looking blue with excitement. ' Mr. Sniggs had kindly taught us to have the pleasure of expecting you this evening.'

" The way in which Mrs. Brandyball empha-

sized the word pleasure gave a better idea of her feeling than anything else.

“ ‘ Ah, by-the-by,’ said your brother, ‘ where is Sniggs—eh?—you told me why he did not come, but somehow or another I have forgotten it.’

“ ‘ Why,’ said the lady, not in the gentlest tone, ‘ of course you know the reason; Mr. Nubley ordered him not to come, because he thought fit to come himself; and as he *was* coming, Kitty was to come with him.’

“ ‘ Ah, I see,’ said Cuthbert. ‘ Well, and you were at the poor boy’s funeral?’

“ ‘ No, Mr. Gurney,’ interrupted Mrs. Brandyball; ‘ Mr. Sniggs told you in his letter that nobody was present but your brother, and his own ’prentice.’

“ ‘ Assistant, dear,’ said Kitty, who had had the advantage of making the pale-faced lad’s acquaintance during her two visits at Sniggs’s house.

“ ‘ Ah, well, it’s a sad business,’ said Cuthbert:—‘ and you are come to stay with us?’

“ ‘ A very short time,’ said I. ‘ I have some matters of business to talk over with you ; but they’ll keep till to-morrow.—You don’t ask after Gilbert, and his wife and child.’

“ ‘ I don’t think,’ said Cuthbert, ‘ to tell you the truth, that either Gilbert or his wife care one cawrie for *me*. Why didn’t *he* come here when poor Tom died, or before he died, and tell me all about it ? instead of *that*, the child, poked out of the house to a strange place, was left to perish neglected.’

“ All this I knew to be a lesson taught him by rote, and I felt half inclined to say so ; but I kept my thoughts to myself, although Mrs. Brandyball seemed to know what was passing in my mind, for she said directly, ‘ Nobody here would take the liberty of putting words into Mr. Gurney’s mouth ;’ so I said to her, ‘ I didn’t say there was ;’ upon which the charming Kitty burst out laughing, and she and her amiable preceptress withdrew to the other end of the room.

“ ‘ Well,’ said I, in an under tone to Cuthbert, ‘ I hope you find yourself tolerably well ?’

“ ‘ Better than ever I expected to be again,’ said Cuthbert ; ‘ this good, kind creature sacrifices everything for me—has sent away all the children, except two, to keep the place quiet, and devotes herself to me—she does everything for me ; and now dear Kitty is come back—eh ? —and—how’s your wife ?’

“ ‘ She is quite well,’ said I ; and I thought in my own mind, what a fool you suffer yourself to be made ; but I kept *that* to myself, and Cuthbert said, ‘ ‘Gad, Nubley, you are at your old tricks again,’ which I suppose referred to something that the infernal Mrs. Brandyball had been telling him about me and Mrs. N. ; however, I found my welcome at Montpelier but an equivocal one, and saw that very little delicacy was adopted to disguise the anxiety of the whole clique for my departure, in order to give them the opportunity of talking over all that had happened at Blissfold ; but as my purpose

was fixed, and I determined to have an hour or two with Cuthbert all to myself, I thought the best thing I could do would be to relieve them of my presence this evening, and start fresh with him in the morning : so skilfully blinding myself to all the nods and winks of the half-weeping, half-giggling young Miss, and the encouraging tappings and pappings which she received from the mistress of the house, I told Cuthbert that I could not stay then, for I was keeping the post-horses, but would call between one and two to-morrow, to which Cuthbert answered by inquiring of Mrs. Brandyball, if he had any engagement for the next day at that time.

“ ‘ None,’ replied the lady, ‘ till three, when you know you are to give Mr. Dawbeny a sitting.’

“ ‘ Ha !’ said Cuthbert, fumbling about for his pocket-handkerchief, which Kitty bounded from the distant sofa to pick up for him ; ‘ that’s it—so—I am—all to please *her*,’ added he,

pointing with his thumb over his shoulder at the Gorgon who stood close behind him.

“ ‘ Isn’t Mr. Dawbeny that handsome man, Pappy, with the black whiskers ?’ said Kitty.

“ ‘ Yes, dear,’ said Mrs. Brandyball, giving her a sort of corrective frown—not corrective so much as cautionary—not a frown of anger, but a frown which seemed to say, ‘ mind what you talk about while that old fogey is here.’ I knew what she meant, but I said nothing—yet I think they saw what was passing in my mind, for the lady turned what I call dead civil in a minute, and asked me, for the first time, if I would not take something before I went ?

“ I very politely answered, ‘ no I thank you,’ because, as I say, civility costs nothing—but in my own mind, I felt myself saying—I would see you at old Nick first—but mum—so I smiled and looked courteous—and Cuthbert said—‘ I assure you, Nubley, Mrs. B. is in earnest, pray have something.’

“ I persisted in my negative, and so having

settled my appointment for to-morrow, I made my bow to the ladies, and shook hands with Cuthbert; but la, deary me! how thin and shrivelled his poor hand has grown!—and so Kitty said she was much obliged to me for the journey, and gave me a kiss. La! Gilbert, that girl kisses everything—well, and I didn't like it—so I said 'thank you, dear,' and felt myself shudder as if I could have said 'ugh;' and she ran away and laughed, and said, 'Well, Sir, the next I give you you *shall* thank me for;' why she said *that* I do not know.

"Well, out I came and got into the carriage, and there I found Cuthbert's man Hutton, talking to my man Watson—they had known each other before, and so I got in, and nobody but a maid-servant to light me out, and she calling 'Hutton, Hutton;' and then I told the post-boy to drive me here; and here, as I have told you, I am; and I wish that was all I had to tell you——

"I got myself snuggled down by a good fire, and I ordered myself a glass of hot punch,

for I felt a little chilly, and I was mortally vexed—and I furthermore ordered myself some supper—for you see what I had eaten I had eaten early—and then I told Watson to bring me my morning-gown, although it was evening, and my slippers, and what not, to make me comfortable—and when he brought them, he asked me if I had heard about Mr. Cuthbert and Mrs. B., and so I said no, because I had not——

“ ‘ I never was more surprised in my life, Sir,’ says he.

“ ‘ At what?’ says I——

“ ‘ Why Sir, Hutton is going to leave Mr. Cuthbert,’ said Watson.

“ ‘ Why then,’ says I, ‘ he’ll die—he is his prop—his right hand.’

“ ‘ Ay, Sir,’ says Watson, ‘ but Mr. Cuthbert is going to have another prop.’

“ So, in course, I asked him what he meant; thinking he was talking like an ass—not that asses ever *do* talk—only I didn’t say so, because I would not hurt the feelings of anybody, Gilbert.

“ ‘ No, Sir, I’m no ass,’ said Watson, just as if he had understood what was passing in my mind—‘ what I mean, is what I know; Mr. Cuthbert Gurney is to be married next Thursday week to Mrs. Brandyball.’

“ After that, my dear Gilbert, I heard nothing more—I would not believe it—I always dreaded some bedevilment—but I never could have fancied! Cuthbert marry *her*!—why, deary me—deary me—the thing is preposterous! The man has no more need of a wife than a Highlander has of knee-buckles, or a toad of a side-pocket—did you ever hear of such a thing? However, Watson persists in it—and think of his turning away Hutton, who did everything for him, and marrying this woman!—you must apply for a commission of lunacy against him—something must be done—why—in so short a time, the use she has made of her influence!—and how did she obtain it? I cannot trust myself to write more—but to-morrow I shall write to you again, after I have seen him and talked to him

—poor silly man ! However, take care, dear Gilbert, to have whatever letters arrive at Ashmead or Chittagong forwarded to me here—I have said *that* in my letter to Mrs. Nubley, but she has a head and so has a pin—eh—don't you see?

“ Now if you think it advisable, say nothing of this to her, or to your Harriet—it is all of no use anticipating misfortunes—we must try to avert them: not that I see much chance without violent measures. Give my kind love, and tell Jenny Falwasser that she is neither missed nor wanted at Montpelier, and that I am uncommon glad she took the line of stopping where she is, although you had better look sharp that you are not saddled with her altogether.

“ Keep up your spirits—my supper is served—gadso ! another broiled fowl and mushrooms—never mind—they didn't know I had one for dinner, and I told them to get what they liked, and so what *they* like I like, and shall fally-to

nobly—and so love to all of you, and confusion to the Brandyballs.

“ Yours always,

“ W. NUBLEY.

“ P.S. If you should hear any tidings of the Thompsons, in course you will let me know.”

So then, this was the result of Nubley's mission to Montpelier. All my worst suspicions were confirmed; nay, they were so far outrun, that although I certainly anticipated some such result in the course of time, I was not prepared to find such advances made in a few days, and those days, too, for the greater part ostensibly devoted to mourning for the loss of the amiable Tom.

Knowing dear Harriet's sensitiveness, and dreading to agitate her needlessly, I resolved upon adopting my kind old friend's advice of keeping her in ignorance of the real state of affairs; and when she begged me to show her Nubley's letter, I hinted that there were parts of it not meant for ladies' eyes; she merely

said "*that* I think is by no means unlikely;" and was satisfied by my telling her that Cuthbert was well, and that Nubley was to see him again in the morning following the evening in which he had written his letter. After this, she inquired no further, and when we retired to rest, she sank into a gentle slumber, which, thanks be to my better information as to the state of affairs at Bath, I could not successfully emulate.

CHAPTER III.

THERE is no comfort so great as having somebody into whose ear one can pour his sorrows, and who is sufficiently devoted to him to listen with interest to the recital of the calamities by which he is oppressed and afflicted. As the world goes, and as man is constituted, the friend who will suffer this, and not trouble one by offering advice, unless specially requested, is unquestionably one of the greatest treasures to be found on the face of the earth.

In my present position such a person was absolutely indispensable to me. In the announcement contained in Nubley's letter I saw the inevitable destruction of all my hopes and expect-

tations; and, moreover, the *fiat* for my immediate relinquishment of all those present luxuries and comforts which my poor deluded brother's liberality had hitherto permitted me to enjoy.

"Why not confide the affair to your wife?" naturally enough would say the first person to whom I had stated the critical peculiarity of my situation. In many, in most, in all cases perhaps, nothing could be wiser or more reasonable for a man to do; but in mine, such a course would have been as dangerous as it must inevitably have been ineffectual. Harriet's feelings upon the subject under discussion were so uncontrollably violent, and her prejudices so unconquerably strong, that, possessing neither the power to check the progress of the great event which was to overwhelm us, nor the ability of suggesting the means whereby we were, if possible, to escape the ruin which threatened us, she would have fallen into a paroxysm of rage at the successful duplicity of Mrs. Brandyball, and the lamentable credulity of her victim: there would have been a scene, terrible to witness, whence

no possible advantage could result. Her affection for *me* would have blinded her to every other feature of the case, and, in all probability, to ensure her tranquillity I must have consented at once to cut the knot, abandon Ashmead, and finally and entirely renounce all farther connexion with my nearest relation.

Now, after all, although it was perfectly true that nothing could be more unpleasant to *us*, or perhaps more indiscreet in Cuthbert, than the alliance he was about to enter into, it was equally true that he had an indisputable right to do as he liked with the fortune he had himself acquired by long toil in distant lands, and that, however absurd and even dangerous to his future happiness the course he had chosen to adopt might appear to *us*, still if *he* felt that his comfort would be secured by a second marriage, what possible right had I to rise up in rebellion against my own brother, and dictate to him the disposition of his accumulated wealth, or involve myself in an unnatural quarrel upon a point with which, if selfishness were not the ground of my

opposition, I could have no possible right to interfere?

“Ay, but,” Harriet would have said, “you mistake the matter, dear Gilbert. It is *not* selfishness, nor covetousness, nor any interested feeling, which should prompt you to break off this ridiculous match if possible. Your uncompromising hostility to it is induced by a love for him, who has no living relative but yourself, and to whom you are bound by ties of blood, affection, and gratitude.”—“Mighty well, Harriet,” I might have replied; “but supposing Cuthbert on his arrival in England had exerted *his* influence over me—much greater, for a thousand reasons, than mine could now be over *him*—to break off my marriage with a young lady of no fortune, upon the ground of some personal pique, or dislike, or upon the general score of imprudence. How should we have regarded his interference *then*?” This, in reasoning, was all philosophical enough, and in principle equally just; but still, if, as Harriet would have contended, Cuthbert was not a free agent, and if he

had been deluded and worked upon by a dangerous designing woman, there did exist a sufficient difference between the two cases to permit, at least, the trial of remonstrance, with the view of ascertaining the exact proportions in which self-will and the influence of another person were combined for the effectuation of the "great end" about to be achieved.

In the difficulties by which I was surrounded, it struck me that the very best course I could adopt, before I either answered Nubley's letter or decided upon any practical measure, would be to consult my worthy father-in-law, although I took the step with the extremely unsatisfactory conviction on my mind that whatever was decided upon, would prove useless and ineffectual. Judge then my surprise, when having invited the reverend gentleman to a conference, at finding him perfectly aware of the intended union, the fact having been that morning communicated to him by Sniggs, who had received the intelligence, *sub rosa*, from Mrs. Brandyball, in a letter, the main object of which, it appeared was

to detach poor little Jane from Ashmead, and secure her return to Montpelier in time for the wedding.

“ But how,” said I to Wells, “ how came this intriguing apothecary, who appears to be preferred in the confidence of my brother to his oldest friend Nubley, to have been authoritatively made acquainted with an important and decided change in our family, even before myself—and what can have induced him to impart this ‘ private and confidential ’ communication to *you* ?”

“ Sniggs shall speak for himself,” said my father-in-law. “ He is a good deal affected by this letter and its contents, and nothing but a fear of misapprehension hindered him from coming with the news to you direct. When I got your summons, I wrote to him to desire him to call at the same time, concluding from the tone of your note, that you had heard of the affair from Nubley, and therefore anxious that our Galen here should have the credit of his first intention.”

"But, Sniggs," said I, "has behaved——"

"Let him explain himself," said Wells, "we are none of us perfect. I think, when he 'states his case,' you will be inclined to entertain a better opinion of his conduct than you now hold."

"I assure you," said I, "that nothing will give me greater pleasure, for nothing I hate more in the world than being obliged to admit that I have been deceived in a man upon whom I had implicitly relied."

"That's it," said Wells; "such a result involves not only the ingratitude of the deceiver, but the perception of the deceived, and, therefore, cuts two ways; however, as the people in the plays say, Here he is."

And sure enough there he stood before us—as different in manner and appearance from what I had ever seen him before as light from dark. The pert, dapper gaiety of his manner was subdued into a quiet, steady gait; and his usually animated countenance was softened by an expression which it was impossible to resist. I held

out my hand to him with a perfect confidence in the justice of Wells's opinion concerning him. He took it with an air of *empressement* unusual with him, but which, prepared as I was for the scene, spoke volumes.

Having gotten thus far, I was puzzled as much as Taylor the water-poet says *he* was in his accidence:—

“ For having got from possum to posset,
I there was gravell'd, could no further get.”

I hesitated—so did Sniggs—he evidently wished to speak—I unquestionably wished to hear: whether he were to begin voluntarily, or whether I were to begin to induce or suggest seemed the only doubt; the worthy apothecary, in point of fact, not being aware that I had been in any degree made acquainted with even the outline of the case.

Wells, seeing the natural embarrassment of the parties, one prepared to give and the other to receive an explanation, broke the ice, by observing to Sniggs that I was in possession of the

fact that he had received a letter from Mrs. Brandyball, and was apprized of its contents.

“Mr. Gurney,” said Sniggs, very deeply affected;—and the spontaneous tear, glistening in eyes which I had scarcely ever before seen except sparkling with mirth, affected me much. They tell us there exists a certain sympathy in our nature touching that particular organ which produces irritability in our own, when looking at irritation in that of another. Whatever the cause might be, I cannot stop to consider; I certainly felt that the sorrow I saw was sincere—I wished it had not been where it was—but I felt myself not entirely proof against its infection.

“Mr. Gurney,” said Sniggs, “I am sure you have felt my conduct, in this affair with your brother and his family, not what it ought to have been—I know it—not a word is necessary to explain your sentiments: permit me therefore, to exculpate myself, and, if possible, reinstate myself in your good opinion by a candid disclosure of my position.”

“Really,” said I, “I am not aware——”

"Yes, you are, Sir," said Sniggs; "and if you are not, I *am*. From the moment I first had the pleasure of introducing myself to Ashmead I was kindly received here; and if some little prejudices existed against me professionally—my friend, Mr. Wells, will understand what I mean—I had every reason to be satisfied and gratified with the manner in which I was treated."

"Oh!" said I, "pray don't speak of that. I——"

"Yes," said Sniggs, emphatically, "I must speak of it—I think of it—and I must speak my thoughts: I will, however, be brief—for I need not recapitulate the history of your brother's arrival, of his kindness with your own, of his confidence in my professional ability, of the illness of poor Tom"—and here, more to my surprise than before, Sniggs again faulted—"or his unfortunate death:—but—what I have done there I know seems—seems—poh—what do I mean by seems?—*was* extremely uncourteous, uncivil, and presuming—originated in nothing more than a feeling that I

was responsible entirely on the score of that poor boy to Mr. Cuthbert—that, whatever was the reason—I did not stop to calculate or argue—I have nothing to do with family differences—he looked to *me, me*, personally about him—and I felt that I looked to *him* for whatever professional remuneration I might deserve—and therefore—I am candid—for I go the whole length of admitting my fault to a certain extent—I certainly did defer to him, as my immediate superior, to the neglect of those to whom I ought——”

“But,” said I, ‘again interrupting him, “I assure you, my dear Sniggs—” (if Harriet had heard *that*)—“I require no explanation—I know no fault——”

—— “No, Sir,” said Sniggs, “but you must have these explanations, else how could I stand justified before you in having in my possession this letter from that devil incarnate, Mrs. Brandyball?—I once hinted that I had heard something about her—that Mrs. Lillywhite, who used to live at the bow-windowed

house at the corner of Caddle-street, knew her, and told me things about her—never mind that—the woman, Sir, if you recollect, with the crimson velvet bonnet and the green cock's-feather—ah, well!—but—I certainly did act upon what I thought were Mr. Cuthbert Gurney's instructions—and all that—but the letter—the letter!”

“What letter?” said I.

“You had better come to *that* at once,” said Wells; “I know Gilbert is perfectly prepared to give you credit for the best intentions, and make any allowance for certain extravagancies committed under a false impression—but the letter is the point.”

“Well, then,” said Sniggs, “perhaps that is best—that in fact will speak for itself—what's to come is, as you say, the point. The truth is this:—feeling myself bound to Mr. Cuthbert, and strengthened in that feeling by Mrs. Brandyball, I followed what I believed was the will of the old gentleman, and seconded, if you recollect, by your own wish that I should go to him, be-

came as it were transferred from you to him. Well—bless me, as I said to Mrs. S., I would not offend Mr. Gilbert Gurney for mints of money—but his brother is so amiable !”

“ Well,” said I, “ but the letter——”

“ Exactly so,” said Sniggs ; “ all I mean to say is, that I thought in all I did I was doing for the best—and as to dividing families, my poor Mrs. S. only thought that the young ladies were to be put under her care just because Mrs. Gilbert was not well enough to be about with them—and I am sure, if I were to die this minute——”

“ But my dear Mr. Sniggs,” said Wells, “ we admit all this—let the worst come to the worst it was an error in judgment—you thought you were acting rightly—but the letter——”

“ That’s it,” said Sniggs, whose extraordinary anxiety to make a favourable impression as to what had passed before *the* letter arrived, led him into the most fidgetty prolixity imaginable —“ yes, I declare to heaven—dear, dear !—only think ! oh that infernal cherry-brandy !—but then

such kindness—I really—upon my word I feel too much—and then the hospitality—I wouldn’t, I declare for all the world, have done—dear me—dear me ——”

“ Well, then,” said I, “ now, my dear friend—give me your hand, all that is forgotten ; I see you are in earnest, I am sure your heart is in its proper place—all that affair is settled. I will meet *your* candour as candidly—I *was* annoyed—you have explained—and now we are quits, and as good friends as ever.”

“ No, no,” said Sniggs,—“ we can’t be—I have been wrong—but the letter”—saying which, he, to my great delight, as thinking it likely to be the *finale* of the conversation, drew it out of his pocket—“ this letter opened my eyes—I saw, my dear Sir, I had been betrayed by that Hottentot of a woman—Dear me, Sir, there’s no compassing her in body or mind—there it is—I tell you Sir, as to the effect this infernal letter has had upon my mental vision, tutty is a trifle to it.”

“ May I read it ?” said I.

“ Read it ? ” said Sniggs — “ to be sure : why — why did I speak to our dear Rector about it else ? ”

The letter was couched in these terms : —

“ *Montpelier.*

“ Dear Mr. Sniggs, — The exercise of delicate attentions which you have so continuously evinced towards our inestimable friend Mr. Gurney, and the disinterested and ingenuous sympathy you have invariably exhibited in all his views and wishes, have excited in his generous and sensitive heart a respect for your character, and an affection for the attributes of your mind, which have formed the basis of a confidence such as he is not usually disposed to make.

“ Encouraged by the exalted opinion he entertains of your qualities — mental, professional, and (may I use the word ?) *cordial* — I have ventured to write you a few lines expressive of his wishes — breathed to me in moments of entire and implicit reliance upon my affection

and discretion—with regard to his relations at Ashmead. You, as he conceives, have been treated there in a manner scarcely correspondent with the exertions you have always made, not only for their good, in the way of medical attendance, but as a social and agreeable companion—and for your qualities in that character can I not myself vouch?—and he thinks, from what dear Mrs. Sniggs has heard of the desire of Jane Falwasser to stay at Ashmead, in conjunction with the resolution of that odious Mr. Nubley to come here to-morrow, that Mrs. Gilbert Gurney has been using some undue influence to wean the affections of the child from a devoted parent—as in truth Mr. Cuthbert Gurney may be called. In short, he is prejudiced against his brother, and wonders that you yourself are blind to the manner in which, upon your own showing, in your letter of yesterday, they have behaved towards you.

“ Our object is, in case Jane should not return to-morrow with old Nubley, to get her

away, *coûte qui coûte*, from Ashmead ; and, that being the case, you are relied upon, as the means of accomplishing the removal.

“ Before I say more on this point, I must tell you, to drop all further mystery, that it is a great object to *me* to have the girl detached from the Gilbert Gurneys ; and since I have seen how kindly you have fallen in with my views up to the present moment, and with the certainty that Mr. Cuthbert Gurney duly appreciates your merits, and is determined adequately to reward all your exertions, I think it right to tell you that on Thursday week I am to become his wife.

“ This is of course told you in the strictest confidence, and told you only to convince you of the reliance I have upon you, founded on your ready acquiescence in the suggestions I made when you were here. As to poor Tom, his death is nothing to lament—he was one of the worst-conditioned boys I ever saw ; but of that we must be silent, because he was a favourite with our dear friend. My present great object,

I repeat, is to get Jane away. I want no link nor connexion with them; and I also repeat that from the way in which you managed the earlier part of the affair, you are the man to do the rest.

“The letter desiring Jane to come to her father-in-law will be of course directed to you, and will—forgive me for touching upon such matters—contain a check on Mr. Cuthbert’s banker for two hundred pounds; I told him he could not do less. You will enforce the child’s removal, and I will take care that his letter shall be quite strong enough in the way of credentials.

“I am as yet not rich, but do not be angry with me for making this letter into a small packet, in order to give room for a pair of bracelets which I think will become the arms of dear Mrs. Sniggs: of course you will caution her as to mentioning to Jane for the present the source whence they come—a fortnight over, and it will matter little; and I assure you I feel a conscious satisfaction in making an alliance

with a dear kind creature whose happiness it will be my constant study to secure.

“ Miss Fatley Fubbs, and that good-natured Eliza Skillygalee—a darling of mine—whom you saw when you were here, are both gone, so that my school is broken up altogether. When you were with us, you did not at all comprehend what I meant about getting rid of my loves. I have now, to use a low expression, packed them all off, except one, poor dear Adelgitha Dumps, whose father is consul-general at Owyhee, and has left nobody in England to take her off my hands.

“ Let me hear by return of post—direct to *me*—and remember me kindly to Mrs. Sniggs—mind she does not mention the bracelets.

“ Yours truly,

“ B.”

“ Well, Sir,” said Sniggs, when I had read the letter and thrown it down in disgust, “ are you surprised now at the repentance, the con-

trition, the horror which have conduced to my disclosure of this conspiracy, and my detestation of the transaction?—I had fallen into the snare—I was acted upon by a certain degree of fear—I speak before friends—I was distracted—I was flattered—I might have been—nay I was deceived—but to turn deceiver—no, Mr. Gurney—the moment the artful woman outwitted herself into a belief that she had secured an accomplice in her plot, and endeavoured to press me into her service against a gentleman who, before I had heard her name or seen her face, had treated me as you had done—the thing was at an end.”

I cannot express how much I felt gratified at this declaration ; I had always liked Sniggs, and had made no concealment from him of my prepossession in his favour, and I was vexed and uncomfortable when I found him ungrateful and insincere. He had now acquitted himself, and stood once more in his old place in my esteem ; and I could not help again holding out my hand

to him at the conclusion of his denunciation of the Brandyball iniquity, as a token of my satisfaction at the course he had pursued.

“ I admit the difficulties in which you were placed, Mr. Sniggs,” said I, “ and all I shall beg you to do is to forget whatever may have been unpleasant to either of us in the past affair. It is now my duty to look forward and to see what is the best and wisest course to pursue.”

“ I have, of course,” said Sniggs, “ no right to advise nor to meddle in your family concerns—I have eased my conscience, and will take my leave, observing only, that my services in any way professional or unprofessional are at your command.”

Sniggs was really affected, and, as is the case where the feeling is strong and genuine, was anxious to say as little as possible ; he was—to put the case plainly and in a homely way—ashamed of himself ; ashamed, partly because he had suffered himself to be alienated from the family through which he had become acquainted

with Cuthbert, and partly because he had been too evidently made the dupe of the "lady," of whom, be it remembered, when he was entirely in *our* interest, he intimated, with one of his cunningest looks, that he "knew something."

The questions which now had to be debated by Wells and myself were these—whether I should join Nubley at Bath, and unite my force with his, in order, if possible, to prevent the marriage, leaving Jane at Ashmead, but communicating to Harriet the *real* cause of my journey; or whether she should be forthwith apprised of the projected destruction of our hopes and fortunes; for it became, as I have before said, no longer a point of mere affection and anxiety to save Cuthbert from misery and dependence, but a matter of serious consideration in a financial point of view. Cuthbert was the prop

"that did sustain my house;"

and every day's expenditure on my present scale of establishment was involving me in

difficulties whence, if his liberality were, as it naturally would be, diverted into other channels, nothing could extricate me.

Tenderness for her feelings and an anxiety not to disturb the serenity of her mind, were to me powerful motives for not apprising my poor, sensitive, kind-hearted wife of the real state of the case; but Wells, who looked at these considerations with a greater share of philosophy than myself, founded perhaps upon the fact that he had been married ten times as long as I had, and that the sufferer whom I wanted to save, was his daughter, pooh-poohed away my delicacy, and, wisely enough, perhaps, (although I confess I thought at the time somewhat harshly)—expressed a decided opinion that the time for concealment was past; and that, if I felt my going to Nubley, and with Nubley to Cuthbert, were essential to the well-doing of the family, I ought to go—and not only go, but plainly tell my wife the reasons for my journey, as well as all the circumstances connected with Sniggs' recantation, the attempt of Mrs.

Brandyball, and the design of abstracting poor Jane.

This latter scheme, however much it betrayed the artifices and treachery of Mrs. Brandyball, and however much I should, and I knew my wife would, have regretted the separation from the girl, whose estimable qualities, in spite of bad education and example, were daily developing themselves, was one which I felt it would be necessary that we should eventually be compelled to acquiesce in. My means, when thrown upon my own resources, would not permit me to increase my family circle by other means than those which might naturally be supposed to make periodical additions to it; and although as a temporary arrangement, under totally different circumstances, our having little Jenny with us was most agreeable, it became a question whether, if I did undertake the expedition to Bath, I ought not so far even immediately to adopt the lady's views as to make the poor child my unwilling companion upon the occasion.

After a certain time passed in deliberation,

it was decided that Harriet should be made acquainted with all the circumstances, and that her opinion, as well as that of her mother, should be taken as to the necessity of my proceeding to Bath, inasmuch as it appeared by Nubley's letter that he himself proposed taking some active measure the morning after he had written, in which case I should arrive too late to be of any use. I knew the moment this course was agreed upon that I should not be permitted to go. Harriet, born and bred in Blissfold, had a horror of a journey, and, although she had so heroically undertaken one herself, full of peril and enterprise for *my* sake, it might have been that the circumstances attending that very expedition had impressed her with the dread she always evinced when anything like my going anywhere was proposed. For this her reverend father called her foolish. I loved her for it, for *I* thought it affectionate.

In the meanwhile Mr. Nubley, whose benevolence was of the active sort, and who did infinitely more than he ever professed, had no sooner

breakfasted than he proceeded to Montpelier, having first earnestly questioned his servant as to his certainty that Hutton had given him the information about the wedding which he had reported.

When he reached the house Cuthbert was not visible ; this, if his anxiety to be at work had not hurried his call, Nubley might have anticipated. The lady was, however, up and down, and dressed in the most captivating morning costume, borrowed, as one might have supposed, from the frontispiece of one of the magazines of fashion. A cap and curls, which would have suited a girl of sixteen, graced her head, and a tight-fitting dove coloured silk dress encased her comely figure ; and as Nubley looked at her well-ringed fingers and a watch (which, upon the principle of the maid-servant in the farce of wearing all the finery she had in the world at once, she had suspended from a massive gold chain), he thought to himself, (at least it is to be hoped it went no further at the moment,) “ *That old fool has given her all these fine rattletraps.*”

To tell truth, according to Nubley’s own

account of the affair, it appeared very much as if Mrs. Brandyball had a strong suspicion that his appearance at the early hour at which he presented himself was somehow connected with a desire to counteract her favourite, indeed, her grand, great, and conclusive project: he saw, of course, her disinclination to facilitate an interview between him and Cuthbert. But Nubley was neither to be driven from his post, nor beaten from his determination.

"I can wait, Ma'am," said he, sitting himself down in a very comfortable arm-chair. "I know Cuthbert's habits: slow, Ma'am—quiet, Ma'am;—but I don't mind."

Seeing that the "old friend" was immovable, she smiled, twiggled her ringlets with a perfect confidence that they would not come off, and said, with a sort of titter, "You shall know the moment he is ready to see you:" and went out of the door, scarcely wide enough to permit the exit, wriggling and giggling in all the security of having completely succeeded in "bagging her bird."

And so she had. It might appear incredible, but it is true, that poor Cuthbert really and truly believed that he had inspired that fair mountain of flesh with a sentimental attachment for him—that she loved him, and for himself alone. These infatuations are too common to permit the thing to be doubted; and, when Nubley began to talk to him on the subject, so far from either denying or extenuating the absurdity, he eloquently, for *him*, not only defended and justified the union, but enlarged upon its advantages and the comfort he should derive from the establishment of a domestic circle, in which he should always be secure of society and repose, and to which he could invite such of his friends and acquaintances as were worthy of such a favour. At the end of which very fine speech he shook Nubley by the hand in the most affectionate manner.

“*You are an old fool,*” thought Nubley. “But,” *said* he, “why were you not satisfied at Ashmead? Why did you throw yourself into an entirely new—eh—connexion?—don’t you see—eh?”

“Ashmead,” said Cuthbert, “was no place for me. Gilbert’s wife is all prejudice—he is hen-pecked—eh? I can’t take the trouble to explain all—that—eh—would wear me out;—but—no—here is a person who has no ties—no—eh—oh dear, dear! how my head aches!—but—what I mean is—she will be entirely devoted to *me*—and——”

“But,” said Nubley, “of course I do not mean to make any indelicate inquiries. You and I have been so long connected in business, I may, perhaps—don’t you see?—without offence, just ask one question—Did you not, when you came home and established yourself at Ashmead, give Gilbert reason to expect that the establishment there was to be supported at your charge?”

“Why,” said Cuthbert, “I declare I do not quite recollect. I thought I should like to live there; and I rather fancy I said something of the kind: but the way in which they treated poor Tom——”

“Which,” said Nubley, “you seem to have

forgotten in particularly good time, since you have fixed your wedding-day so soon after his funeral."

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, "all *that*, as we know, is prejudice. Here in England they keep dead people for a week before they bury them; in India, you know, we pop them into the ground twelve hours after they die. I want comfort, support, and companionship; and it seems that the way in which I am domesticated with the exemplary Mrs. Brandyball here is giving cause of scandal."

"Of what?" said Nubley.

"Scandal," said Cuthbert, raising himself with considerable difficulty on his sofa. "My stay here has been thought improper—and in fact some of her pupils have left her school in consequence; and, finding her a most agreeable companion, I am bound to marry her, and marry her I will."

Having said which, the rallying of all his courage to pronounce the *dictum* proved too much for him, and he sank backwards on the

pillow of his couch, in a state of most melancholy exhaustion.

“ Yes,” said Nubley, “ but what is to become of Gilbert and his wife and child, and all that ? There is an establishment set up at your desire, and by your own direction :—you marry this woman—you adopt altogether the children of your former wife—what is to happen to Gilbert ? —*I should like to hear what you say to that.*”

“ Gilbert,” said my brother—“ why—what should happen to him ?—he never did anything I asked him to do—he might, as you know, have been as rich as either of us ; but he never would exert himself—never came out to me, after twenty separate invitations. Eh !—dear me—this fatigues me—but—well, and when I accidentally met him——”

“ He *was* going out,” said Nubley—“ eh, don’t you see ?—*there I had you, old fellow*—but what is that to the purpose ? you came home—you put him up where he is—now, come—don’t haggle and boggle. What do you mean to do for him ?”

"Nothing, Sir," said Cuthbert, "nothing. Mrs. Brandyball tells me that they hate me—laugh at me—despise me—and were delighted to get rid of me. Kitty—dear soul—the most ingenuous creature that ever breathed—says the same; so does Sniggs—an excellent man—as Mrs. Brandyball tells me."

"Tells ye!" said Nubley—"Gad!—why the deuce do you care for what anybody tells you?—can't you see with your own eyes?—hear with your own ears?—walk with your own——"

"No, no," said Cuthbert, "I can't—I have neither nerve nor constitution for all that desperate exercise."

"Then you will be made a fool of," said Nubley—"a laughing-stock—a May-game! What! discard your brother, who loves you—who would sacrifice anything for you—for this brazen-faced B——"

"What?" said Cuthbert.

"——Brandyball," said Nubley, "who knew nothing of you, nor you of her. All I can say is——"

"Mr. Nubley," said Cuthbert, again raising himself in his *chaise longue*—"forgive me—I never took the liberty of making any observations upon your domestic *ménage*—you'll forgive me, Sir—may I ask you just to ring the bell?"

"To be sure," said Nubley; and he rang the bell accordingly.

Hutton obeyed the mandate.

"If," said Cuthbert, panting with excitement, "if Mr. Nubley has a carriage here, he is ready for it."

"Carriage!" said Nubley; "not I—I came on what we used, as boys, to call Shanks' mare my friend."

"Then, Hutton," said Cuthbert, "Mr. Nubley is going—open the door."

"*You are a d——d jack-ass!*" thought Mr. Nubley, in his way.

"Ass or not," said Cuthbert——

"I say nothing, my dear friend," said Nubley; "but this I *do* say, that you will repent of this—and so, after your extremely civil attention

as to my retirement, I go. I wish you were rational—but you are not.”

“That, Sir,” said Mrs. Brandyball, who had been listening to the dialogue in the next room, and now showed herself, “is a matter of opinion. I believe that the sentiments of a generous mind devoting itself to the gratifying task of ameliorating the——”

“Whew!” said Nubley; “that won’t do with *me*, Ma’am—I don’t understand all your fine figurative tom-foolery. My friend Cuthbert has been deluded, cheated, tricked, and humbugged; and if he chooses to go to old Nick with his eyes shut, that’s his affair—mine is to try to open them.”

“Well, then, Nubley,” said Cuthbert, in a tone of energy, and with a manner of which nobody who had ever seen him for the last twenty years would have thought him capable—“well, then, if that is your opinion, and that the course of argument you pursue, and the line of conduct you propose, I must desire your absence.

I am convinced that what I have decided to do is essential to my comfort and happiness; and since you must know the truth, if you choose to come to my wedding next Thursday week, I have no doubt the future Mrs. Gurney will not object to your presence; but as that event is fixed, if you dislike it—eh!—Gad, you may stay away.”

And, having concluded this prodigious announcement, he again fell back on the sofa, as little like a bridegroom as anything that ever was presented to observation.

“As an old friend of Mr. Gurney’s,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “I certainly shall be extremely well pleased to receive Mr. Nubley, although I must say his conduct in this affair has not been quite in accordance with that generous sensibility which ordinarily regulates the intercourse of those whom earlier associations——”

“That will do, Ma’am,” said Nubley; “take him, and have him all to yourself; but if I ever profane a church, or debase myself, by witnessing the ceremony, why, then——”

"This is too much," said Mrs. Brandyball, firing up in the most tremendous manner: "please, Sir, to recollect that this is *my* house, and I expect——"

"*Your* house, is it, Ma'am?" said Nubley. "If I had known that I certainly should not have set foot in it. I understood that *this* part of it at least was my friend Gurney's; but, I'm off—I leave you to the enjoyments you propose to yourselves, and——"

"Mercy on me!" cried Mrs. Brandyball, "dear Mr. Gurney has fainted."

And so he had: and while the lady was ringing for Hutton, cold water, Kitty, and all other imaginable restoratives, the eccentric Nubley took his hat and umbrella (for he prudently never walked without one), and quitted the pur-lieu of Montpelier.

All this, which came to my knowledge afterwards, was so completely decisive of our fate, that nobody could blame Nubley for writing the strongest possible letter to me, which I received on the morning following that upon which, under

the advice and entreaties of Harriet, I had determined upon *not* going to Bath.

Nubley, who was one of those determined, resolute friends who are not to be put down or put out without a considerable degree of trouble on the part of conspirators against a joint cause, resolved to remain another day at Bath, in order, first, to write a remonstrative letter to Cuthbert, arguing, not so much against the marriage, as against his total abandonment of me and Ashmead, which Mrs. Brandyball seemed to think essential to the completion of her triumph; and, secondly, to receive whatever letters might have come to Ashmead to his address, inasmuch as he calculated that it would be foolish to quit the place to which he had desired me to forward his "despatches," and let them hunt him, as it were, across the country.

The letter I received from him, stating that he should return to Blissfold the next day, did not contain any description of the effects of his interview with my brother. He merely said he had seen him—that he seemed to be perfectly under

the controul of the Jezebel, as he called her—that the four-and-twenty hours' residence of Kitty under her roof had so completely changed the character of her external conduct, that she did not seem to consider it necessary even to affect anything like civility towards him; and moreover deploring in the deepest terms of distress the state of the whole concern. Of course what occurred at Bath reached me after the period at which it was resolved I should not go there; but Harriet's excitement and anger, mingled with her anxiety to keep poor Jane with us, and poor Jane's desire to stay, were altogether very painful—I really and truly did not know what to do. I had despatched my kind old friend's letters on that day as he had desired, and of course should have abstained from doing so the next day, if any had arrived, he having announced his proposed return, and, as I had seen, having failed altogether in the object of his mission.

Well, if it were so, I am equally obliged to him. There was an earnestness of intention

and a singleness of mind in what he did which could not fail to insure my regard and esteem. All that vexes me in Harriet's view of the affair is, that she sees no goodness—no kindness—no attempt at conciliation in anything that anybody has done; all she looks at is, the huge, monstrous, gross injustice of Cuthbert's conduct, and the folly, madness, cruelty, &c. &c. &c., of all the measures he had taken; although, if the truth had been to be softened, I do really believe that Harriet, and what I call *my* ladies, meaning thereby the ladies of my family, did not quite so much sacrifice their own personal feelings, or devote themselves to his recreation and amusement, while he was staying here, as perhaps they might have done. That he was gone from us for ever was most certain.

“Well,” said Wells, “for *my* part I see nothing you have to reproach yourselves with; if every attention to his comfort, a perfect mastery of your house, and all that appertains to it, could content him——”

“Ay,” said I, “but contenting and pleasing

are different things; and—however, it is no use trying back upon this. I certainly feel extremely unhappy that circumstances should have so alienated from me the only relative I have in the world.”

The uncertainty of worldly affairs is one of the favourite and most fruitful topics of writers, ancient and modern; and it was only to some extraordinary event, upon which nobody could calculate, that I might venture to look with any hope of averting the calamity, for such I could not but consider it, which impended. As for Harriet, as I had anticipated, the conflict in her mind was terrible—the passions and feelings which agitated her were so numerous and so violent, and so new to her, that it was quite impossible to discover which predominated. Anger, contempt, hatred, regret, and despair, affected her by turns, or rather, I might say, *en masse*, and the result was that never having been similarly excited at any previous period of her existence she was obliged to go to bed before dinner, while Jane passed the evening at her bedside,

sobbing and crying—why, or about what, she hardly knew; except, as she might have foreseen, that her removal from Ashmead would be one of the consequences of the marriage of her doting father-in-law.

I confess I felt anxious for Nubley's return, in hopes that I might extract more from him in conversation than from his letters, having made up my mind, at all events, to go to Cuthbert myself before my fate was finally sealed, and despairing as I did of producing any effect upon his settled resolution, avow my inability to remain at Ashmead without the continuance of his assistance, and—which I thought a reasonable design—suggest to him its adoption as his future residence. Harriet wondered how I could calmly talk of such a thing, or consider the case patiently, or the affair as finally settled. I knew that resistance to his will was useless, and thought that quiet acquiescence was, in such an extremity, the best tone to assume. I only postponed, as I have just said, the execution of my design till

Nubley's return, which, however, did not occur so soon as we had been taught to expect. What delayed it I shall perhaps be able to write down in my notes of to-morrow.

CHAPTER IV.

To a man who has been subjected from his earliest days, if not to the vicissitudes of fortune in a pecuniary point of view, at least to the vagaries of fate in every other, and who has lived for many—if not very many—years amidst the fluctuations of hope and anxiety, the arrival of the post is unquestionably the most exciting event of the day. A thousand apprehensions are conjured up, a thousand feelings called into action, by the sight of his letters; indeed, at least, such is the effect of their appearance upon *me* that, within one day's reach of London, I

look upon Monday as a season of delightful and undisturbable repose.

If this was my ordinary state of mind, it does not seem very strange that, upon the particular morning on which I expected a line from my kind-hearted old friend Nubley, announcing the time at which we might expect him, or perhaps conveying some further intelligence of his proceedings, or perhaps announcing his return, upon which much at all events depended, and from which more perhaps than was generally anticipated by others might probably result, I should be somewhat violently excited. I was up before the post arrived in Blissfold in order to wait and watch its arrival. I paced first the hall, and then the gravel sweep up to the hall-door, resolved to get the earliest intelligence by intercepting the boy with the bag, of which, since certain discoveries had been made, I had kept the key myself; and as I walked up and down I felt an aching, sinking feeling at my heart, more painful than I had ever felt before, and which proved to me how much interest I took—as naturally I

might—in the expected intelligence for which I so earnestly hoped, and yet so seriously dreaded.

How minutes turn to hours, and hours to days—ay, and days to years—while the mind is thus anxiously employed! how every sound that breaks upon the ear seems to take the tone and character of that which we long to hear! and oh! what a thousand thoughts flitted through my mind, fleeting and fading, as to the probabilities—the possibilities of Nubley's success even yet in restoring me to the affection of a brother whose love I never had deserved to lose.

The church clock struck nine—never was the mail so late before—it must have been overturned—robbed—or, which would at that moment have affected me, with all my sympathy and humanity, even more than either, the mail itself was all right and there was no letter for me; still, said I to myself, I will not give up my watch, I will persevere; and so I *did*, till the chimes informed me that it was then half-past nine.

And, by the way, the chimes at Blissfold,

which were particularly harmonious, and upon which the inhabitants particularly piqued themselves, appeared to me to be of a most singular and somewhat perilous order as to their construction and arrangement; for the Sunday they were so managed that they gave us psalm-tunes for the quarters, and halves, and three-quarters of hours, but during the week they varied extremely from that orthodox style of harmony. On Mondays they played "Charley over the water;" on Tuesdays that favourite air from the Beggar's Opera, "I'm like a ship on the ocean toss'd;" on Wednesdays "Nancy Dawson;" on Thursdays "Rule Britannia:" and so on for the other days: and it certainly appeared to me somewhat more curious than agreeable as a coincidence, that when we were entering the churchyard with the funeral of Gunpowder Tom (as Wells always called him), these melodious carillons should strike up, as if at the particular moment for the particular purpose, another of the popular airs from Gay's *travestie*—

“ If thus much bolder a man can die
With brandy—”

which really happened; and, even now, “ I’m like a ship on the ocean toss’d,” sounded somewhat apposite to my own condition: nevertheless, however well the air might accord with my circumstances, I could find no peal to chime in with my feelings, and when the clock struck ten I came to the resolution that I was doomed, if not to disappointment, at least to a day of suspense, and walked despondingly into the breakfast-parlour, where the first object that met my eyes, lying on the table, was the letter-bag itself, which, it appears, had arrived at the usual time, but nobody had imagined that I should care enough about an event which happened in the house six times in every week to desire to be called in from my walk to open it, and so I was left to perambulate. “ The boy never came by the lodge ” — “ always came across the fields,” and so on; and there I had been fussing and fidgeting myself for an hour and a half through the tender solicitude of the

servants, who were too delicate to disturb me in my promenade up and down a gravel drive between two hedges of evergreens.

I *was* vexed and cross, and I might have said—I will not write it—suffice it that it was quite enough to have convicted me in a five-shilling penalty before my reverend father-in-law in his magisterial capacity. The storm, however, soon blew over, and, with a hand trembling more from anxiety than anger, I opened my Pandora's box. There were several letters, the writers of whom I knew by their calligraphy, and one or two which at any other time might have interested me, but the one—single—(there I am wrong, for it was double) letter for which my eyes eagerly searched was, when seen, the only one upon which I pounced with eagerness and almost agony. It was the one I so much dreaded, yet so much desired.

I broke the seal and read:—

“ *Bath, Monday.*

“ Dear Gilbert,—Strange things have hap-

pened. One of the letters which you forwarded to me, as I requested, contained some thundering news for Cuthbert—what it is, I cannot tell you, because it probably might involve the reputation of other people. I may, however, say that it is likely to prolong my stay here; it will take time to explain the particulars to your poor rickety brother, who seems to me very likely to be killed with Mother Brandyball's kindness: as for the sincerity of her devotion to him time will show that, and, rely upon it, I will not quit him without assuring myself that she is a very different sort of person from what I think, or opening his eyes to her character as I take it to be. I have not written to Mrs. N. because you can tell her of my stopping here, which will save double postage, and also spare her the trouble of reading a letter, which, to a purblind beauty who is above wearing spectacles, is no joke.

“ Give my love to your wife, and remember me to Jane, who is a jewel compared with her sister. I think, if I am not mistaken, I shall be

able to make you stare before you are three days older. I'll do my best.

"Yours truly,

"N. NUBLEY."

The perusal of this letter puzzled me exceedingly; I could (to use a colloquial phrase) make neither head nor tail of it. How would he surprise me?—what in the world connected with the affair *could* surprise me? still I could not help seeing that something upon which he relied as likely to be of service to us, detained him at Bath. Gratified by finding another straw to catch at, I resolved to live upon hope, and give my wife and father-in-law the benefit of a perusal of the old gentleman's letter. Considering the allusions made to Mrs. Nubley's imperfect vision and resolute abjuration of assistance, I thought it wiser merely to convey his excuses for not writing, verbally.

"Lauk, Mr. Gurney," screamed Mrs. Nubley, "What a man you are! I believe Nubley

is ashamed of writing—he — he — he ! — he is such a giddy goose when he once gets away from me—there's no getting him back—he—he —he !——”

The idea of poor old Mr. Nubley being likened to a giddy goose was nearly too much for my gravity.

“ Oh,” said Harriet, speaking graciously, in order to conceal or rather justify a smile,—“ he will be quite safe.”

“ Lauk, I don't know, dear,” said Mrs. N., “ I don't think a young ladies' boarding-school is a safe place for a very susceptible gentleman — he — he — he ! — you don't know my dear Nub.”

The fact is, that thirty or forty years before, Mrs. Nubley had begun to be exceedingly jealous of her dear Nubley, and, although he had grown far beyond the reach even of a suspicion of infidelity to his excellent spouse—she had gone on during the whole period, day after day, continuing her doubts and uncertainties, wholly unconscious of the march of Time or the effects of

his incessant attentions to both herself and her feeble mate.

“ Hope springs eternal in the human breast ; ”

and I confess that I derived, at least, a strong negative satisfaction from the old gentleman's letter. It was clear that something had occurred to strengthen the probability, or at least the possibility, of rescuing Cuthbert from the trammels of his hypocritical tyrant ; and, upon re-reading the welcome epistle—especially the passage in which Nubley declined enlightening me further at the moment, lest he should “ involve the reputation of other people ” — I could not help fancying that he might have received such information regarding the lady as he considered likely to open my poor infatuated brother's eyes to the real character of the present arbitress of his fate. Something, it was clear, had occurred—and for the first time almost in my life I was feverishly anxious for the arrival of the next day's post, which might relieve me from my present state of suspense.

Upon a further examination of my morning's letters, I found one from an old friend, of whom I had heard nothing since we last parted, and of whom I never expected to hear what his epistle communicated. My correspondent was Daly; and, although a very little time had elapsed since his visit to Blissfold, a most extraordinary change appeared to have taken place in his pursuits, prospects and principles: indeed, knowing the turn of his mind, and his affection for fun, I could scarcely make up my mind whether he were in jest or in earnest in his communication. One fact he had ascertained, that he was a widower—the fair, frail, fickle object of my early devotion was no more. She died in Ireland, whence she never returned after her separation from her husband; but, in addition to this intelligence, Daly permitted me to understand that he was not likely long to remain in a state of sorrowing singleness; he more than hinted that his second marriage would be more advantageous in a pecuniary point of view than his first; but neither mentioned the name, age,

nor circumstances of the lady; indeed there was a strange precision in his style of writing, and a mysterious solemnity in his hints and suggestions, which (as I presumed he meant they should do) puzzled me exceedingly: but the most puzzling parts of his allusions were those in which, speaking of himself, he said he was thankful to providence for the great change which a short time had worked in him, and that—sinner as he had been—he now trusted he had obtained a true sense of his own weakness, and that he should improve the opportunity which had been afforded him in so blessed a manner, of knowing his own unworthiness.

Reading a man's letter is a very different thing from listening to his conversation. Upon paper, the same words which, if delivered *viva voce*, might be either serious or ironical, according to the tone and look and manner of the speaker, go for no more than they literally express; and when I found my volatile friend dealing in language such as I never had heard him employ, I was at a loss to comprehend what he really

meant; and most assuredly, if I had set myself to guessing for a week, I never should have hit upon the real state of the case. I was, however, spared the trouble of long consideration by the unexpected arrival at Ashmead, at an early period of the day, of no less a personage than my old, worthy, and omniscient friend, Hull.

His appearance, so wholly unlooked for, startled while it pleased me. His kindness and hospitality in my earlier days had made a due impression upon me, and I never ceased to esteem him—but knowing the activity of his movements, and his inextinguishable anxiety to be the expounder and explainer of everything of every sort that happened to be going on, I could not help associating in my mind his *impromptu* visit with some yet unknown circumstances connected with my own affairs, which he had thought of sufficient importance to justify a journey of seventy miles in order to communicate them.

Never did I see such an evergreen—or ever red—as my worthy friend; as for time or age,

they had no more effect upon him than an April shower would have upon Portland stone; nay, even the powder which, when I first knew him, whitened his hair, had been discarded, and the natural colour of his curls shone in all its pristine brownness—still, when he approached me, I felt more and more convinced that the mere pleasure of a visit to *me* did not altogether constitute its object.

“My dear friend,” said Hull, eyeing me through his glass—“why, what a fellow you are!—how well you are looking!—what a paradise you have got!—often have promised myself to come—heard much about it—eh—a certain friend of yours told me—but—pooh! pooh!—all stuff and nonsense—you know what I mean—eh?—Daly—all that—but never gave me a notion—splendid—magnificent—why, my dear friend, Stowe or Blenheim are nothing to it!”

“The cabin is convenient,” said I; with a pang which went to my heart, when I thought how frail my tenure of it was.

“Cabin—pooh! pooh!—don’t tell me—and

Mrs G.—eh ?”—said Hull, his large blue eyes twinkling with an expression of mingled interest and waggery—“eh ?—never saw her—beautiful woman—child—surprising creature—eh ?—come, come, no joke, I happen to know—lovely boy—eh ?—don’t tell *me*—how is her father ?”

“Quite well,” said I; “but is he an acquaintance of yours ?”

“Acquaintance !” said Hull; “my dear Sir, I have known him these forty years. His father was curate of Crumpleby, in Cheshire, where my great aunt was born. Pooh ! pooh !—I have a little property in the North—go there every year—vanish—abscond, and am absent—I happened to know all his relations.”

“I am sure he will be delighted to renew his acquaintance with you,” said I.

“My dear friend,” said Hull, “I don’t know *him*. When I say I know *him*, I speak of his connexions; but I know he is an excellent fellow—ay, and a remarkable good scholar. Did he ever tell you the story of his wedding-day and the soldiers? He !—he !—he !”

Whereupon I stared, and Hull stuck his thumb into my ribs to make "assurance doubly sure," and I again received the most certain conviction that my omniscient friend *was*—what some horrible infidels sometimes doubted—always correct in his facts, and authentic in his histories.

"You will meet Wells at dinner," said I.

"My dear friend, I can't stop to dine," said Hull. "I am off to Portsmouth, where we last met, on most particular business—*most* particular; and *you* know what it is about."

"I!" said I; "indeed, no."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Hull; "don't tell *me*—you know everything—eh?"

"Upon my word I do not," said I in return.

"What!" exclaimed my friend, growing almost blue with excitement, "not know!—You don't mean to say you don't know? I'm going to Mr. Dingygreen, the agent, about matters in which you are deeply interested."

The moment he uttered these words I felt conscious that all my forebodings were to be

verified, and that something connected with myself was actually mixed up with his visit.

"My dear friend," said Hull, "haven't you heard?"

"What?" said I.

"Why, my old friend Cuthbert, your brother, is utterly ruined, Pooh! pooh! you dog, you knew *that*?"

"Upon my honour, no," said I.

"Why then," said Hull, screwing up his mouth into a circular form, and reducing it to a size inconceivably minute, "I am afraid you must have wondered at what I have been saying; but you *do* know—eh?—I know you do—don't tell *me*."

"All I know of my brother," said I, "is, that he is at Bath, and on the verge of ruin I readily admit; but I was not prepared to hear that it was consummated. Has she really secured him?"

"She!" exclaimed Hull, "who is she?—what d'ye mean by she? My dear friend, you don't mean to tell me that you are in the dark—hasn't he written to you?"

"No," said I, falteringly, for I did not like to let even Hull know how sadly I had been deprived of a fond and kind-hearted brother's affection and confidence, "he has told me nothing about it."

"Dear, dear!" said Hull, wiping his forehead, which exhibited signs of unseasonable heat, evidences of warmth of interest rather than of weather; "My dear Gurney, he is ruined—lost—done or rather undone; instead of investing his money in the funds here, or in buying estates, or what not, he left it all in the hands of Messrs. Chipp, Rice, and Hiccory, of Calcutta, and they have smashed. Cuthbert has not a shilling to bless himself with—not a penny."

Now came upon me the whole truth of Nubley's statements—now did I see the reasonableness of his mystery, and the justness of his apprehension lest he should involve the characters of respectable people by letting me into the secret—now did I see the fallacy of my hopes, that Mrs. Brandyball's reputation was the one of which he was so tender—and now, more—

over, did I see, in the strongest possible colours, my own doom and destitution.

I suppose, being of a candid disposition, and the countenance being the index of the mind, the expression of mine did not appear to Hull as conveying anything like a sense of obligation, or a feeling of gratitude, in return for the information with which he had favoured me, for he forthwith dressed his laughing face in a garb of sorrow, and, holding his glass in his hand at an angle of forty-five from his nose, made that sort of noise which people are in the habit of adopting when they are very sorry for having said or done something which they ought not to have said or done, and which cannot be spelled or written, but which is produced by a sort of cluckling monosyllabic sound against the roof of the mouth of S't—s't. It is as useless to endeavour to put it upon paper as it would be to reduce to writing the encouraging somethings which a coachman says to his horses when he performs a certain evolution with his tongue

against his teeth, or sucks in a mouthful of air to give them a cheering "chirrup," something in the nature of whistling reversed.

At the moment when I saw Hull puzzled, I was puzzled also. I was quite undecided whether his apparent vexation at having abruptly imparted to me the ruin of my poor brother, was or was not more than counterbalanced by the delight he constitutionally felt at being the first bearer of the earliest intelligence of an event, the eventual effect of which is to a newsmonger not of the slightest importance; one feeling of my heart at the moment however could not be transcended—poor Ashmead must be surrendered—poor dear Cuthbert would fall into distress—and in *that* there *was* one cheering and redeeming hope—I—yes—I myself, with my paltry, trumpery independence, might relieve him from embarrassment and perhaps even poverty; and, oh! how happy would Harriet be! — doubly happy, if that might happen, and we yet could rescue him from the

besetting influence under which he was now labouring, and with our small pittance show our generous feelings towards the man who, with the best natural disposition in the world, had been fascinated away from us, and taught almost to hate and despise us.

Hull saw by my countenance that something was passing in my mind.

“My dear friend,” said he, looking at me with his glass at his eye, “when I say Cuthbert is ruined, I don’t mean to say that he will be a beggar, going about the streets holding out his hat for halfpence. Pooh ! pooh ! No :—I happen to know something about the matter. He may scrape a good deal out of the fire. I have known thousands of men—all intimate friends of my own—when I say thousands I mean two or three, who have smashed just like Chipp, Rice, and Hiccory, and yet, when everything was gone, there was always something left :—my dear friend don’t tell *me*.”

“I was not thinking of that,” said I. “My brother, so long as I have a guinea in the world,

shall be welcome to half of it; I am thinking rather of the new connexion with which he has got entangled at Bath."

"I know," said Hull, winking diabolically, as I thought at the moment, "Mother Brandyball—always call her mother—eh?—knew her husband intimately—nearly forty years older than her, when they married—have danced her on my knee—and a beautiful babby she was."

Is it Ahasuerus or Methuselah? said I to myself, marvelling to hear my excellent friend talk of having dandled the Gorgon Brandyball on his knee. Having played leap-frog with Doctor Johnson, or trundled a hoop with Sir Joseph Banks, would have been nothing to it.

"Never mind *her*," said Hull, "we can talk of *her* another time—Nubley is working there——"

"Why," said I, opening my eyes to their extreme width in astonishment, "how do *you* know that Nubley is there?"

"How!" exclaimed Hull, with a crow of exultation, "haven't I told you a hundred and

fifty times that I have nothing in the world to do but to know every thing?—besides, in this case I am rather interested.”

“ In which case ? ” said I, “ will Cuthbert suffer very seriously ? ”

“ My dear friend,” said Hull, “ that is at present a secret, or at least a doubt—nobody knows—at least very few—eh !—I am in it—besides, I am personally concerned, I tell you—I have money depending.”

This announcement certainly qualified my astonishment at his omniscience as affecting this particular business: however—as he no doubt meant it should—his intelligence had given an entirely new turn to my thoughts, and, in the midst of my apprehensions that a fall from our present position might be the result, and I did not think the chances against us much increased by the occurrence, seeing that I considered *our* fall finally settled by the Brandyball affair, I could not but feel an anticipation of the pleasure I should receive in proving to Cuthbert the sincerity and immutability of my affection, by

offering him a share of my income, humble as it was.

From Hull's manner I was convinced that he was sincere in his determination of not stopping to dine, but I begged him to stay for luncheon, in order that I might introduce him to Harriet, and, if I could secure his attendance, get my father-in-law to be of the party; not more for the purpose of enlivening my guest than to give him another triumph over my never-ending doubt as to the universality of his acquaintance. In this last attempt however I failed, Wells was absent—but my wife was made acquainted with my friend, and we sat down *cosily*, and I thought of other days.

“Sweet spot, Ma'am, this,” said Hull; “in summer it must be lovely.”

“You have a very nice place of your own, Hull,” said I.

“Me!” exclaimed my friend; “pooh! pooh! —a box—a band-box—good garden—plenty of fruit—gooseberries—currants—but this!—pooh! it is Paradise.”

I could scarcely refrain from irritating my old friend into a vindication of his apple-crop, which I knew I could have elicited, but I was afraid of Harriet, who, having heard of his peculiar sensitiveness with regard to the "bushels" of that popular fruit which loaded the trees of his Tusculum, I restrained myself—I almost repented that I had, for, much to my alarm, (my better half being present,) Hull began to talk of Daly; and when he *did* talk, his delight being to show how intimately he was acquainted with everybody's business, he generally became more communicative than I had any desire he should be, touching my earlier acquaintance with my faithless friend.

"You have heard of Daly?" said Hull, who according to his profession ate no luncheon, and merely went through the motions for sociability's sake, which gave him the more time for eloquence—"to be sure you have."

"Yes," said I falteringly.

"My dear friend, he is going to be married to a widow—pooh pooh, worth a million of money."

I gave him a look which I wished him to understand, expressive—at least I meant it to be so, of a desire not to touch upon the matrimonial part of Daly's history, for, although I had concealed nothing from my Harriet of any real importance, but on the contrary had told her the truth, it *might* be that I had not told her the *whole* truth, inasmuch as there were sundry incidental circumstances connected with my youthful proceedings, her knowledge of which did not appear to me likely to increase her respect for my prudence, or elevate my friend Daly in her estimation. Hull, however, mistook the expression of my countenance, and evidently construed it into a sign of incredulity as to the amount of the intended Mrs. Daly's fortune, for the moment our eyes met he continued—

“When I say a million, I mean probably twenty or thirty thousand pounds—and quite enough too. Poor Emma:—eh!—you dog!—she hasn't been dead more than five or six months, but Daly very soon got into a new connexion. I suppose, Ma'am,” added he,

looking at Harriet, "you know all about *that*, eh?"

Harriet made an equivocal inclination of her head.

"His versatility is curious," continued Hull, who *would* talk, and would *not* eat; "to think that he should have taken to that line——"

I was rather astounded, and said really inquisitively, "What line?"

"The preaching," said Hull.

"What!" said I, "preaching?"

"Oh, you dog!" said Hull, "you know—don't tell me—he has got into what is called a connexion—in less than a week the whole thing was settled—when he came to town he sold his book of travels in Tomfoodledoo, or whatever foodledoo the place is called, which he told me you had seen, to an eminent publisher—He was then asked by Miss Somebody to give a lecture upon the probable effect of a missionary expedition to the scene of his labours; he did it—and the effect he produced was such, that—don't tell me—he was the very next day invited to

become the pastor of a flock of Independent Christians at Clapham—my dear friend, you'll find it fact—he got a three-and-sixpenny licence and started. Old Drone, of Hackney, lent him his pulpit—and Mrs. Waddlebom, the widow of a Wapping ship-chandler, took to him so stoutly, that in less than five days after she first heard him, he won her heart."

"Daly a preacher!" said I.

"What, *your* friend Daly!" exclaimed Harriet.

"Oh," said Hull—"he—he—told you of Daly—such a man—macaroons—cows in cupboards, eh—don't you recollect, eh?"

"No," said I, "but you eat nothing——"

"Nothing!" exclaimed Hull—"I have eaten pecks—but I say—Gilbert, d'ye remember the three legs of lamb and the spinach—eh—don't you recollect the French Count and the——"

"Yes," said I, interrupting him in a tone not likely to encourage the style he had adopted—"but with respect to Daly, how can he so suddenly have adopted this line—it is but a very

short time since he was down here, and then he had certainly no idea of taking to that style of exhibition."

"My dear Ma'am," said Hull, turning to my wife—"you know nothing of Gilbert's early friend, Daly—pooh! pooh! such a fellow!—I have known him carry home a bag full of knockers and bells, when he has dined with *me*—thousands of signs—Red Lions and Green Dragons—all the same to him—and the Cow and the—eh—he—he!"

This was too much; the reminiscences grew powerful and perilous—however, in order to save myself—I tried back upon our excellent friend's adoption of what might be called the clerical line.

"True," said Hull, "quite true—I tell you he preaches——"

"Well, but," said I, "it is less than three weeks since he was here."

"Versatility was always his delight," said Hull.

"Versatility!" said I; "yes, but the versa-

tility which can convert a man from an author into an actor, and then into a parson——”

“My dear friend,” said Hull, “nothing so natural in the world—Daly was on his last legs—all gone—done, dished—what was left?—nothing but the Tabernacle, and there, under the especial protection of his puritan publisher, he succeeded—and I give you my word—all true—hey?—you will find him the happy husband of a woman with I do *not* happen to know how much a-year.”

I was not particularly sorry to hear that Daly had fallen upon what Hull called his “last legs,” but I certainly did once again begin to doubt the invariably correct history of Hull; and then I took a fancy into my head that he might have cherished the idea of taking—if not to the church, to the conventicle, by finding my worthy father-in-law extremely comfortable, and carrying on the duties even of the Establishment with an agreeable air of gaiety. What had hit him which could have induced him to take to

his present calling I certainly could not ascertain, but the visible result—I mean the captivation and capture of a rich and well-to-do widow—proved to me that, as far as worldly matters went, he had in a few days done much more than he or anybody else could have expected.

Having got this subject nearly over and out of the way, nobody can imagine the nervousness with which I was afflicted lest Hull should revert to the story of Daly's first wife—that was the point—and a point which, as I anticipated, he most particularly thought it facetious to hit.

“What a nice girl Emma Haines was!” said Hull.—Harriet looked strangely.

“Yes,” said I, “very nice——”

“Strange chance Ma'am that you were ever Mrs. Gilbert Gurney,” said Hull, chuckling; “if it had not been for Daly's winning ways I never should have been here nor you neither; odd—curious to think upon what little things great things turn—eh? my dear Ma'am, there he was, all over head and ears in love—true—

eh? I happen to know, when—pooh! pooh! don't tell me—Daly went down to a—watering place and put his nose out of joint.”

“ Well,” said I, with an affected indifference, “ Mrs. Gurney knows all that, for I have told her the whole history; but his present position seems much more curious.”

“ Curious,” said Hull, “ there never was such a thing. My dear friend, as I told you long ago—I happen to know—he is one of the cleverest dogs in the world; the moment the notion was given him of winning the widow, in one week he worked the scheme; and, however much you seem to doubt it, he is a preacher, and considered a good one, too, amongst the connexion. He is not slow in his movements—all touch and go; whether they are widows or not—eh? —you dog—he! he! he!”

I wished him at old Nick—my thoughts reverted to his early ill treatment of me, and then I fell to thinking of his letter to me and its contents, and began more to understand its bearings. The word connexion, which I had taken

merely to refer to the expected marriage, I found to combine also the spiritual connexion with some eccentric sect to which he had, *pro hac vice* attached himself.

As for Harriet, never having been accustomed to the ways and manners of society like that in which my worthy Hull had been so long and so constantly in the habit of moving, she was extremely pleased and even astonished by his manner; for dear Hull was the most gentle and gallant of men when there were ladies present, and the fellow of all others to speak of them kindly and justly when they were absent. He was a good creature, clever himself, and an admirer and appreciator of talent in others: but my wife had never seen what is called the world; and therefore as she could not exactly comprehend our visitor, she could not help wondering at him; and, to tell the truth, his observations and remarks kept me, as I had anticipated, in a state of so much nervous excitement, that I was not sorry when Harriet left us, having taken leave of her new old acquaintance earlier than she other-

wise would have done, inasmuch as she had left Jane to entertain Mrs. Nubley, who could not be induced to come down to luncheon, when she heard there was a male visitor, because she was, "lauk such a figure—he ! he ! he !"

When my wife had retired, and I saw Hull fidgetting to get away, I proposed walking with him down to the inn, whence he was to mount his "yellow and two," *en route*, to Portsmouth.

"My dear friend," said Hull, "let me beg of you not to think of such a thing—me—take you out of your house—pooh ! pooh !—no : stay where you are—I beg——"

"I am going to the rectory," said I. "I must have my walk, and on our way you will, perhaps tell me—for I was delighted you did not mention anything before Harriet of the Indian business—what you really think the result of my poor brother's misfortune or indiscretion will be."

"I can tell you all I know here," said Hull. "I think things are not so bad as they are represented ; and I happen to know that I can

pick up undoubted intelligence at Portsmouth. I'll write to you thence; but—now don't trouble yourself, my dear Gilbert, to walk. Mrs. Gurney is alone, and——”

“ No,” said I, “ she is not; she has two companions,—she will be busy—and the weather is fine, and I want to see Mrs. Wells; so, come along.”

“ Upon my word,” said Hull, looking very serious—and it was surprising to see what a gloom he could throw into his usually joyous countenance——“ it vexes me——”

“ Come along,” said I, pushing my arm within his, and jocosely poking him along; “ don't talk nonsense.”

“ Nonsense,” said Hull; “ my dear friend, I don't talk nonsense; I know that a man in your position must have a great many things to do—many affairs to look after—why should *I* break in upon you?”

“ Many things to do?” said I; “ I wish I had. I have nothing to do.”

“ My dear friend why *should* you have any

thing to do?" replied, or rather inquired, my extraordinary companion; "an independent man like *you*—don't tell me."

"Well then," said I, "if that be the case, and the position is an enviable one, which I assure you I do not acknowledge, what better use can I make of my time than in walking with you to the inn, where my appearance may, perhaps, have the effect of securing a pair of faster horses, and a more sprightly driver than you would otherwise get?"

"My dear fellow, I don't want fast horses," said Hull, evidently soured by my pertinacious attention to his comfort; "it makes no difference to *me* whether I get to Portsmouth at five, or six, or seven, or eight—pooh! pooh!"

"If that's the case, Hull," said I, "you might as well have stayed with us, and dined and slept."

"Pooh! pooh!" answered he; "what do I want with sleep? Now *do* return home. Mrs. Gurney will hate me for taking you away."

"Not she," said I; and, upon a principle of

opposition and contrariety, which might perhaps, serve to illustrate the vileness of our nature, I resolved not to go back, because it appeared to me that Hull had some especial and particular reason for wishing me not to go on. This fallibility of humanity shows itself universally; nobody is ever satisfied by seeing other people having things all their own way; from the jealousies and bickerings at Court, or in the Cabinet, to the commonest struggle in the street, the spirit is the same. As the great English censor says, speaking of some ministerial rivalry,

“ So, if some dirty urchin dares encroach
On the hind foot-board of a hackney coach,
His playmate shows the envy of his mind
By bawling, Cut—cut—cut—cut—cut behind.”

In the present case Hull's anxiety evidently was to cut *me*; but I was “unshakeoffable,” and, as the French gentleman says, the more he tried to persuade me, the more I would not go back.

Finding me resolved, he became silent, and

looked sad, as I thought; and, having revolved something in his mind, burst out with a strong desire to do himself the honour of calling at the rectory, to drop a card for Wells, where he could leave me.

“But,” said I, “my dear Hull, we must actually pass the inn to go to the parsonage—I never saw you in such a worry before.”

“Oh! not I,” said Hull; “nothing worries *me*, pooh pooh.”

And hereabouts in the dialogue we reached the summit of the gentle acclivity, whence one again descends into Blissfold, and I was about to entreat him to enlighten me a little more with regard to Mrs. Brandyball’s early history, of which he had professed to know much, when I beheld a female of Brandyball dimensions, but considerably her senior, with a bright crimson cloak and fur tippet, a bonnet of remarkable size and shape, the relieving colour to the whole appendage being coquelicot of the most fiery tinge.

“Ha!” said I, “here is a stranger—a rarity in these parts!”

Hull did not without his glass distinctively perceive the approaching mass of humanity, but, having made use of his "preservers," he uttered his customary "pooh, pooh!" in the deepest possible grunt, and made one more effort at checking my progress with—"Now, pray don't come any further."

"Oh, come on," said I; "let us see the new arrival."

"Oh! arrival—pooh!" said Hull: "well never mind."

We neared the object, and when at the distance of about five or six yards, the lady puffing and blowing with the exertion of getting up the little hill, exclaimed, in a tone of the severest reproach—

"Oh, Tommy, Tommy! I thought you were never coming; there's the dinner a spiling, and gitting as cold as ice."

"Tommy!" said Hull, looking as fierce as a turkey-cock; "don't Tommy *me*." At the end of which speech, which brought them in closer contact, he gave her a glance expressive

of rage at her rashness, and an earnest desire that she should submit to be "cut" as patiently as the little boys by the hackney-coachmen.

"What d'ye mean, Mr. Hull?" said the lady: "why do you order an early dinner, and say we shall enjoy ourselves—as nice a steak as ever was seen, and pickles and 'tatoes to match—and then go and stay away till near three o'clock?"

"My dear aunt," said Hull, "I could not help it——"

"Aunt! what d'ye mean by aunt, Tommy?" cried the lady. "I'm sure the gentleman must be quite shocked to hear you talk in this way."

"I am too glad, Ma'am," said I, "to have the pleasure of making the acquaintance of any relation of my old friend."

"Relation!" almost screamed the lady.

"Pooh, pooh!" said Hull. "Go away, Ma'am—I'm coming—go and get things ready. I'll be down directly——"

"Not I!" said the lady: "if I'm not good enough to walk down this little dirty place with

you, I'm sure I'm not good enough to ride about in chaises with you all over the country: so come, no nonsense, give us your arm."

"My dear friend," said Hull, "good day—good day—don't come any further;—I—really—that's the worst of travelling with one's relations."

"Don't talk stuff, Tommy," said the lady: "you have been galivanting about—just like you—and I'm left to eat cold rump-steaks—"

"Galli what?" said Hull—"pooh, pooh!—hold your tongue."

Seeing the state of affairs, and having realized the suspicions which had, during the latter part of our walk, grown up in my mind, I thought it but fair to accede to his wish, and leave him in the quiet possession of his amiable friend; and accordingly I shook hands with him just at the mile-stone, and was bidding him farewell and bowing with the greatest ceremony to his travelling companion, when Wells, and his wife, and Bessy, made their appearance by emerging from a gate, which opened to the Town-field,

and actually cut off the descending pair from the possibility of reaching their destination without passing them.

“Ha!” said I, “here’s my father-in-law.”

“Good bye,” said Hull; “good bye—some other time—eh? My aunt is hungry—he!—I happen to know—pooh, pooh!”

Saying which he fidgetted past the coming trio, and, although he might have been extremely intimate with Wells’s relations, neither the time nor circumstances seemed at all suitable to a furtherance of the acquaintance; although I found as usual that Hull had spoken the whole truth when he claimed a recollection of the Rector, who perfectly well remembered his name, and having been much edified by the reports of some of his dissertations upon the productions of the venerable Caxton and Co. many years before.

I really was sorry, after what did actually occur, that I had so resolutely “stuck to his skirts” in the walk. Whatever might be the relationship between the little gentleman and

the large lady it was nothing to *me*, and I admit that I should not have liked, under similar circumstances, to have suffered a similar interruption, besides which, as misfortunes never come alone, the inopportune appearance of the Rector and his family did not much mend the matter.

It may naturally be supposed that Wells was by no means sparing of his jokes and remarks upon what he had witnessed; however, the subjects of greater importance which occupied our attention somewhat diverted him from his full play, and, having resolved to say nothing to Harriet or her mother of the news that Hull had brought of Cuthbert's altered position, we waited, as may naturally be supposed, with the deepest anxiety for further intelligence from Nubley at Bath.

CHAPTER V.

THERE was something irresistibly droll in the way in which my waggish father-in-law took the account of Hull's aunt, and the joint-stock travelling concern—to *me*, what I saw was a surprise of the most extraordinary character, inasmuch as I never had, during my acquaintance with my excellent friend, heard of any relations that he had ; and as to such a relation as the one he had just produced, implying an extensive family—not only a person but a pedigree—such a thing had never escaped him. Wells merely said that if his old friend Hull had aunts, our recent

neighbour Thompson had nieces; by which I found that my reverend relation rather doubted the consanguinity: but then if the story were not true (and if it were not, it would be the first that Hull had ever told me of that character) what could it mean? The only man in the world who insists upon it, that every story must have a foundation, is a builder, and there is he right enough; still there *have been* stories raised upon grounds which were never calculated to bear them, and I really was unable to account for the incident; for, considering the personal appearance of his companion, unless it *had* been his aunt—as he said it was—what could have induced him to travel about with *it*, not being sufficiently mercenary to make *it* a show?

The appearance of the lady brought to my mind a story told by the late Dr. Mosely, of a huge animal called a Mannatee, which is occasionally washed ashore dead at Barbados, where the Doctor for some time resided. This stupendous piece of Flotsom and Jetson was a matter of vital importance to the blacks, who, being

slaves, were so extremely well fed, that they delighted rather to abase than exalt their taste, by having a touch at the Mannatee, upon which they went to work in the most extraordinary manner. Some time after giving an account, or rather relating a tale of this monster, Mosely dined with George Colman; and of the party was a lady of bulk and shape much resembling Hull's aunt with the coquelicot ribbons. The Doctor, remembering the form and size of the Barbados monster, whispered to Colman—

“Gad, George, you have got a Mannatee here.”

“A man at tea!” said Colman—“no—a woman at dinner, you mean.”

And here, while I *am* setting down things, I cannot but note the criticism of the said excellent physician, to whom the then youthful author read his “Incle and Yarico.”

The Doctor (Colman called him Muz) listened with great attention to what certainly—next to “The Duenna”—is the best English opera—perhaps giving “Love in a Village” a chance—

and bowed and smiled, and was evidently pleased from the beginning to the end of it; at which end, naturally enough, as the finale, this couplet appears—

“ Now let us dance and sing,
And all Barbados bells shall ring.”

The Doctor suddenly drew up, took snuff, and said “ Pah !”

“ Well, Doctor,” said the author, “ what do you think of the piece?”

“ Won’t do, George,” said the Doctor.

“ Why?” said the author, “ what do you find fault with, the plot or the dialogue?”

“ Neither.”

“ The songs?”

“ No.”

“ The sentiments?”

“ No.”

“ The characters?”

“ No.”

“ What then?”

“ It won’t do, George, pah !”

"Why?" said George.

"Why!" said the Doctor, "because it is nonsense.—You say,

"Come let us dance and sing,
And all Barbados bells shall ring.

Trash, George! there is but one church bell in all Barbados."

This piece of medical hypercriticism was enough to drive a young author mad, but our admirable dramatist, luckily for the world, survived it.

The little flurry and bustle created in our quiet circle by the unexpected arrival, short stay, and hurried departure of Hull, having subsided, Wells and I retired to the library—I used to call it *my* library, but I have left that off—to consider the probable results of the great misfortune which had unquestionably befallen my listless and improvident brother, and the best we could make of it was, the inevitable surrender of Ashmead; and such is the blessed elasticity of the human mind, that we had scarcely come to that conclusion, when Wells, who was naturally

anxious to keep us near him, pointed out a small six-roomed house next door to Kittington's (and much about the same size), as one which would just suit us in our altered condition; the gardens ran parallel to each other, having each a straight gravelled walk with box edgings, with a twin arbour at the bottom of either, both exactly alike, and *dos-a-dos*, overlooking the windings of the river through the grassy meads. Well, what did it signify? a consciousness of right feeling, the certainty that I had a wife whom I loved, and who loved *me*, and an income which, however small, was certain, encouraged me in this view of things; and even so far did all the circumstances of my fall enter into my calculation, that I rejoiced in having formed a high, and justly high, opinion of the honest honourable man, who seemed under the circumstances destined to be my next door neighbour.

And after all, what is it?—the representative of his Sovereign at a foreign court, or the Governor-General of India, with all his thousands of subservient attendants, with all his

pomps and pageantries, and with all the honours and glories which devolve upon him, comes home—not, to be sure, abased by misfortune, but changed in station by time, which officially, and for a due preservation of patronage, renders a change of Governors necessary; and we find his Excellency, the greatest of all Bahaudars, either inhabiting a two-roomed house in Harley Street, or an apartment at an hotel. Cuthbert himself had lived splendidly as a merchant at Calcutta, had given fêtes and fine things, and had been as much considered as anybody out of council might be; what then? we would try and make even him comfortable—his rooms would be smaller, but, as he disliked moving about, what of that? we could contrive his curry and his kabobs; and as for myself, to secure his love and affection, I would have gone without curry or kabobs, or even a single *entrée*, for the rest of my life.

What we very much speculated upon was the effect this sudden reduction in his fortune, and consequent change in his circumstances, would produce upon Mrs. Brandyball, to whom, there

could be no doubt, Cuthbert had, in a most extraordinary manner, attached himself: however, having already had some experience of Nubley's prudence and foresight, I agreed with my father-in-law to leave the issue to him, who, being on the spot, and having an influence over my brother, which, if not superior to the lady's, was at least based upon a long and intimate connection with him, mercantile and personal, and to endeavour to pass a tranquil evening in the bosom of our family.

But how difficult is it to command the feelings or confine the thoughts! What means, except such as lead to ruin, mental and bodily, have ever been devised to conquer depression of mind, or misery of feeling?—I mean those

“Of keeping spirits up
By pouring spirits down!”

If there can be an excuse found for the proverbial aptitude of the lower classes to drink, it is to be discovered in the ills and wretchedness which assail them. Dreadful is the alternative, but health itself is readily sacrificed by an unhappy

being, whose sorrows cannot be otherwise alleviated.

Not yet having recourse to this balm, it was more difficult for me to keep my thoughts from travelling—not for the benefit of their health—to Bath, and resting there. It was clear that a crisis was at hand, and the fact that I and Wells had prudently, as I believe, resolved upon not admitting either Harriet or her mother into the secret history of the Indian failure, kept me in a more feverish state of agitation than if I had been able to talk the matter over with *her*, whose interests were inseparable from mine, and whose anxiety for my happiness, and even for my well-doing, were unquestionable.

It is fortunate that circumstances sometimes occur, which, although of no particular importance personally to ourselves, are, from certain combinations and concatenations, rendered sufficiently interesting to divert our thoughts, at least for a time, from things which really prey upon the mind. At this crisis of our fate an incident “turned up,” to use my favourite expres-

sion, which unquestionably did affect at least one of our family party.

Poor Fanny Wells had been considerably excited in the early part of the day, just after the arrival of the post, by Sally Kerridge running suddenly into her room, and, bursting into tears, stammering out, half choked with grief.

"Oh, Miss!—Miss Fanny!—oh, what is a transport, Miss?"

"A transport!" said Fanny; "why, you seem to be in a transport yourself, Kerridge."

"Oh no, Ma'am—not I," sobbed the poor girl; "I wish I was—no—no—the Seahorse, Miss Fanny,—it's the Seahorse, Jibbs, master."

"Does what?" said Fanny, to whom the energetic appeal was wholly unintelligible and incomprehensible.

"Oh Miss Fanny!" continued the maid, "it is too bad; we have both been served alike—we have indeed, Miss! Tom Lazenby is gone with the Captain abroad—but he says he is in a transport; does that mean that he has been transported, and can't come back, or is he gone of

fancied it might be the Dean of St. Patrick's who has written Humphry Clinker and the Sorrows of Werter, and is still alive in Glasgow, it is only the back part of the ship, quite the reverse of the head.

“ Having just given this scratch of my position in course you will be exceedingly contumacious to know what brings me here—I will answer you fairly—my good-nature. Captain Merman exemplified to me that I should inflict a fever on him if I would go with him and his bitter half as far as Spain, even if I did not stop, which would be at my hoption when we derive at that town—so I insulted Susan who is a true fiend to both of us, what I should do, for I asked the Captain as I did on the former occasion for ten minutes to consider—and Susan devised me by all means to go, for raisins which weighed with me but which are too numerous to insert in this place; and so I conformably excepted the office and here I am. If this hepistle is not quite so creckt as most of mine usually is, de-

scribe it all to the irregularity of the pillows which is waving about very much outside of the vessell.

“ So my plan is dear Sarah to try my fortune a bit in this foreign land which will postpone our hymnal conjugation for a few weeks—perhaps more—for Susan says she knows people who have been in Spain and like it, and she is very constructive in her views and knows a little of everything.

“ The only thing which vexes me is that you do not know Susan.

‘ Black eyed Susan came on board,’

as Shenstone says. Her mistress and she are as thick as thieves and I think we shall make a good thing of it.

“ I hope Miss Fanny has given over fretting about the Captain; he speaks in very genteel language about her when mistress is out of the way—but I think the Captain has caught a tarta. However as for Miss Fanny I hope she will not think anything more about him, for what’s past

cannot be recalled and ' what's the use of sighing.' I'm all for Peter Pindar, who says,

' Sigh no more, ladies—ladies, sigh no more ;
Men were deceivers ever ;'

and to speak in the words of Addison ' you cant make a silk pus out of a sow's ear,' you cant have more of a cat than her skin, and you cant have a man beter than natur has made him.

" I hope Captain Cavendish Lorimer has arrived at Blissfold—he is the officer which I told you Rattan mentioned to me, is to succeed Captain Merman, and I think well cackelated to irradiate the recollection of my master, from the mind of your mistress—I suppose if he has a smart insinuating servant *my* chance will be but a bad one—however dear Sarah please yourself ; if you find constancy a trouble, forget me—even if I lose your love I shall be sure of your steam, and that's a beautiful sentiment to cherish.

" Poor Susan is dreadfully subverted by seasickness, but I suppose we shall both mend as we get use to it—old Nep is uncommon blustratious

—only she is in her lady's cabin to be taken care of.

“ I am very sorry for one thing, which is, that I cannot have the consolation of getting an answer to this, for I am out upon my travels and dont know where I shall be next, so do not fret yourself about *that*, dear Sarah ; ‘ Alls well that ends well,’ as Julius Cæsar the great Greek said when Mr. Ravilax shot him in the street at Portsmouth which we have just left—no doubt we shall meet again one of these days.

“ I enclose you a one pound note dear Sarah to make good what you have paid for me—I have no way to send you the wach which I took for the man to riggeleat it, so I keep *that* as a *suvanir*, and Susan wears it to keep it going till she restores it to you—it goes remarkably well now.

“ And so dear Sarah good bye—if we go to the bottom of the brinny dip we shall never meet more in this world, but if we should be safe and prosperous we may yet pass many days in what Dr. Watts calls ‘ reglar jollification’ — so

keep up your spirits and with kind love to all friends at Blissfold believe me dear Sarah yours truly, in which Susan joins

“ T. LAZENBY.”

“ Well, Miss,” said Kerridge, when Fanny had finished reading it, “ what do you think of *that* ?”

“ Why,” said Fanny, “ I don’t know much of such histories, but, as far as I can judge, I think that your lover is not likely to return soon. Susan, whoever she is, appears to have sup-
planted you.”

“ Only to think,” said Kerridge, “ after all he said to me—like master like man, I do believe.”

“ Pray do not talk in this manner,” said Fanny; “ I must beg, once for all, that, upon no occasion to anybody, you will ever mention the subject of Mr. Merman’s conduct, or couple it with that of his servant.”

“ No, Miss, I won’t,” said Sally; “ but I’ll be revenged on him. I will not take pyson, nor

make a hole in the river : no—he shall see what I will do ;—to think of Susan, as he calls her, wearing my poor mother's watch to keep it going ; it always went well enough before. Oh ! Miss Fanny, isn't it too bad ?”

“ You see what he says in the letter, Kerridge,” said Fanny :

‘ Men were deceivers ever.’

“ Ah, that's true enough, Miss,” said the gentle Sarah ; “ both of us have cause to know the truth of that——”

“ There again, Kerridge,” interrupted the young lady ; “ just this moment I desired you never to couple our names or circumstances in this affair, and now——”

“ Oh !” said Kerridge, “ I beg a thousand pardons ; I really don't know what I am saying, but I know what I will do.”

“ Do nothing rash,” said Fanny. “ A man who would treat you in the way he has done, is not worth regretting.”

"No, Ma'am," said Kerridge; "just like his master, he——"

"There," said Fanny, "that is the third time you have broken my injunction; now leave me: compose your spirits. Mamma, if she sees you, will wonder what has happened to you. Go away and be reasonable."

"I will, Miss Fanny," said Sally. "I take example by you and——"

A warning look sufficed this time to convey her young mistress's reproof for the fourth infraction of her command, and she quitted the room, having refolded the barbarous letter of Lazenby with the greatest care, and deposited it in some folds of her drapery very near her heart. Cleopatra could not have been more magnanimous; but letters, though they sting, do not always kill.

It may be perhaps as well for me here to explain the cause of my sister-in-law's exceeding anxiety that the name of Lieutenant Merman, or the circumstances of their very unsatisfactory

acquaintance should not be alluded to, inasmuch as it is generally understood that there is a melancholy pleasure derivable from a reference to past scenes of happiness, even though that happiness has been blighted, and inasmuch as Fanny Wells had, up to the then present moment, never harshly interdicted the subject. She did not encourage her maid in conversations regarding the Lieutenant, or the events inseparably connected with his name ; because, although she had a feeling almost amounting to esteem, for Kerridge, her sense of what was due to her character as her mistress, checked a course of proceeding which would perhaps eventually lead to an undue familiarity ; and as Fanny, after Merman's final abdication, had no need of Kerridge's services in the way of ambassadress or messenger, she merely suffered her to allude to scenes of other days and evenings, and at most permitted her to talk, without replying ; inasmuch as Lazenby was always the main object of her lamentations and anxieties, and his master merely an accessory to the history.

But on this particular morning the interdict was issued—the name of Lieutenant Merman was never again to be breathed.

Now for the motive to this sudden *veto* on the part of pretty Fan.

The Captain—or Lieutenant, as the case may be—Cavendish Lorimer, who had succeeded Merman in the command of the recruiting party at Blissfold, and of whom Lazenby had spoken so favourably, had arrived the day before. Fanny had seen him, and “in truth he was a proper man.”

Churchill says—

“ Figure I own at first may give offence,
And harshly strike the eye's too curious sense ;
But when perfection of the mind breaks forth,
Humour's chaste sallies, judgment's solid worth,
When the pure genuine flame by nature taught
Springs into sense, and every action's thought,
Before such merit all objections fly.”

And Sheridan upholds the same doctrine, by declaring that the only difference in the success of an ugly lover and a handsome one, is six weeks in point of time ; and this may be true to a certain extent ; but on a girl like Fanny

the imposing figure of a well-dressed soldier set off to the best advantage, whose countenance was exceedingly fine, whose features were perfectly regular, and whose air and manner were particularly graceful, makes a first impression which goes pretty deep into the mind, if not into the heart. Fanny, I say, had seen the new comer, and her father upon his avowed principle of "marrying off," in the illustration of which he had recently failed so deplorably, lost not a moment in calling upon Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and offering him the hospitality of the Rectory, at a moment when his own little domestic arrangements could scarcely be supposed to be made.

Captain Cavendish Lorimer was exceedingly flattered by such a mark of attention, and accepted with many acknowledgements the Rector's invitation to dinner. The set-out, as it is called, of Captain Lorimer was so decidedly superior to the establishment of his predecessor—two splendid horses and a newly-invented light gig, with a cross spring at its back, from which it depended,

called a Tilbury (after the builder), one of which jaunty vehicles my father-in-law had never before seen, and a regular well-appointed groom, with white leathers and tops—elevated the new arrival to a vast height in the sporting Rector's estimation; and an accidental reference, in their first conversation, on the part of the Captain to his cousin Hurstperpoint (whom Wells knew to be an English Viscount) settled him in the very zenith of his favour.

"Dinner precisely at six," said the Rector: "you will excuse early hours, but——"

Captain Cavendish Lorimer bowed, as might be expected, and looked as if six o'clock were the hour of all others in the day, at which he rejoiced to dine.

Were there not great doings at the Rectory thereupon? No man could put down on his table a better dinner of its class, or bring up from his cellar better wine of its sort, than Wells; and Wells was resolved upon this occasion to do his best, for, be it observed, beyond his general disposition as to "marrying"

his daughters, the circumstance of Fanny's desertion (after two pardons) of her fickle swain rendered it the great object of his life to show the *public* of Blissfold, whom he affected to despise, that Fanny was an object of attraction, and worthy to be the wife of a better gentleman than Merman.

Having imparted the history of the invitation to Fanny, having lectured his cook, having made all his other arrangements tending to the perfection of his little feast, and having expatiated to her upon the style of man who was coming, Fanny considered it absolutely necessary on the instant to stop Kerridge's tongue as to Captain Cavendish Lorimer's predecessor; inasmuch as if this sort of tittle-tattle got about, Captain Cavendish Lorimer might take it into his head that Fanny was a Blissfold belle, transferable to the attentions of the officer commanding the recruiting party for the time being.

Fanny was not vain, but the announcement of the intended visit flurried her—pleased her: it opened to her mind a hope of being revenged upon Lieutenant Merman, in a manner probably

different from that in which Kerridge proposed to wreak her vengeance upon Lazenby; and she sat herself down before her glass, and bit her lips to make them red, and drew her white hand along her arched eyebrows to make them smooth, and twisted her ringlets round her taper fingers to make them curl, and spanned her waist, and smiled at herself, pleased with her little preparations for the havoc which she proposed to make with the heart of Captain Cavendish Lorimer.

Another little trick Miss Fanny played, which I found out only afterwards. Her sister Bessy, as soon as Kitty Falwasser was safely removed, had returned to the Rectory from Southampton. Now Bessy was grown to that age and size which, without qualifying her to be "out" in the London acceptation of the world, rendered her extremely attractive. She was rising sixteen; she had got out of her plumpness, about which, while *I* was courting—or courted, as the case may be—I used to rally her; the pinafore was discarded, and the style of her dress properly advanced; and a finer young woman I never

saw in my life : such a pair of sloe-black eyes ! to which a snow-white skin, with hair like the raven's wing, afforded a striking contrast, are seldom to be found ; and when it is recollected that the dear creature's unworldliness was such, that the commonest appeal to her, in ordinary conversation, brightened up her fine pale countenance with a blush which, as the novel-writers would say, converted the lily to the rose, it is not very surprising that she had been noticed, when seen, in a manner extremely agreeable to herself, but not quite so satisfactory to Fanny, who, like all elder sisters who have not yet gone off, was by no means anxious of having a "rival near the throne."

When Fanny suggested to her Pa that the table would look much better if the number were even, and that Bessy could go to Ashmead and dine with Harriet, whom she knew would not come, and with Mrs. Nubley and little Jane ; and that I, and her Ma, and Pa, and Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and herself would make the six, the worthy Rector bade her

count again; when she found to her dismay that the absence of Bessy would cause the very oddness of numbers which she so much deplored. Wells, however, saw in a moment what Fanny meant, and as it was Fanny he wanted to dispose of, not only because, to use his own expression, it was *her* turn in the order of things, but on account of the circumstances of her disappointment, to which I have before so often alluded, he gave her one of his "comprehensive" looks, and said—

"Yes, if Gurney comes here, Bessy had better go to Ashmead to keep Harriet company."

What a thing it is to find such a good understanding in families!

After Wells had separated himself from his ladies he imparted to me the project of the day, and insisted upon my joining his party, which would relieve the awkwardness of a *tête-à-tête* after Mrs. Wells and Fanny had retired. I at first positively refused, alleging that in the present state of my mind society was anything but

agreeable, and that I should be extremely disagreeable to a stranger : but he pressed it strongly upon me, and urged, with some truth I believe, that if I had been left at home with Harriet through the evening, although Bessy and Jane, and even Mrs. Nubley might be there, I should not have had firmness or resolution enough to keep the secret of Cuthbert's sudden impoverishment from her ; a point which he thought essential, more especially as he had made up his mind not to confide it to Mrs. Wells.

At length I consented, having, however, first asked my dear Harriet's permission, which I not only received, but, coupled with it, an expression of her earnest desire that I should go, and bring home a full, true, and particular account of Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and of all his perfections, merits, and accomplishments, in praise of which Papa had been so lavish. I thought, pending this little parley, that I saw Bessy's snowy bosom heaving more quickly than usual, and something not very unlike a tear standing in

her sparkling eye ; but a moment's reflection, I suppose, told her that she was not "out," and therefore must stay where she was. Poor dear !—so she conquered her natural wish to be of the party and became tranquil.

I confess, upon reflection, that I did not regret this little break-in upon our anxiety, for although Wells could not feel so deeply as I did under the circumstances, still the interest he naturally had in his eldest daughter's comfort and happiness must have awakened a certain degree of solicitude upon the point ; not, however, sufficient, it was clear, to interfere with his endeavours to secure the comfort and happiness of his second child. Accordingly then, I promised to be with him at six precisely, and the carriage, which was to be sent to bring me back, was to convey dear, bright-eyed Bessy to the Rectory, *after Captain Cavendish Lorimer was gone*. Poor Bessy ! bless her little heart !

Harriet, who was all ingenuousness, and whose countenance, as I have before said, was truly the index of her mind, always appeared to me

to be somewhat amused whenever her father was busied in his matrimonial speculations, and I could see that this enticing invitation of Captain Cavendish Lorimer brought to her mind all the similar proceedings at the rectory, not only as connected with ourselves, but as to the previous designs of her reverend parent upon Lieutenant Merman in *her* behoof before even I had made my appearance, when, as it seemed for the first time, that distinguished officer had been transferred to Fanny.

Before my departure for the Rectory I promised to give her a detailed history of all our proceedings on my return, and she promised, let it be never so late when I got home, to be awake to hear the news; and having made all these arrangements, I walked down at a quarter before six to my father-in-law's hospitable dwelling, and, in less than twenty minutes more, found myself in the drawing-room, having been introduced in due form to Captain Cavendish Lorimer.

A finer specimen of humanity I have rarely

happened to see ; a combination of curling black hair, bright expressive eyes, an aquiline nose, white teeth, dark whiskers, high forehead, fine figure, graceful manners, and unaffected good-humour, at once burst upon the spectator ; and, in five minutes after my presentation to the new arrival, I admit that I felt strongly prepossessed in his favour. So much for personal appearance and first impressions.

To be sure I had from habit associated in my mind the countenance and general aspect of Lieutenant Merman with the office which Captain Cavendish Lorimer now filled in Blissfold ; and as I never concealed my aversion from that most odious of mortals, the real merits and advantages of his successor broke upon my sight with a satisfaction not unmixed with surprise : certainly the Captain's *contour* was most agreeable.

The moment I glanced my eye at sister Fan, I saw that upon this particular point we were, at all events, *d'accord* : nor could I help remarking the studious care with which, aided by the deserted disconsolate Kerridge, the dear girl

had brought all her points to bear upon the enemy. Every attraction of face and figure had been well studied, and, like the heroine of my early muse in the infernal farce, which always and for ever rose in judgment against me, she—

“Clearly was dress’d for heart-slaughter;”

and, in “truth,” (as Sandy has it,) the performance was highly creditable to both mistress and maid; to say nothing of Nature, who had done her handiwork remarkably well.

There is something soft and subdued in the conversation of strangers before dinner, which I suspect is meant to pass for great refinement and delicacy, but which wears off delightfully as the day wears on; and we were so extremely mild and quiet in the moderated light of the drawing-room during the unpleasant quarter of an hour in question, that I had no opportunity of judging the mental superiority of our visitor over the departed Lieutenant, until the welcome words “Dinner is ready, if you please,” were uttered by my father-in-law’s butler—as he was called

because he wore no livery—and Captain Cavendish Lorimer offered his arm to Mrs. Wells to lead her to the dining-parlour.

I saw Wells was fidgetted—it would be impossible by that arrangement to get the new comer next Fanny—but even with all his acknowledged anxiety upon the anti-Malthusian principle, he could not well change the established order of things, and therefore I took Fanny, Wells giving himself the benefit of the doubt which we had often discussed, and which I have before noted down, whether of the two positions the more favourable to the accomplishment of his object, is the being next neighbour to the lady, or *vis-à-vis*. I have already registered my opinion, and I am sure, especially when so presentable a person as Captain Cavendish Lorimer is the subject, that *vis-à-vis* for the opening of the campaign is the more advantageous. When the acquaintance has grown into friendship, and it is considered meet that it should ripen into love, next-neighbouring is the thing against the world: but until so much of association has

taken place as will render half-whisperings, and soft mutterings, and gentle hints, allowable, the telegraph system is the better; and I felt certain that a moment's reflection would convince the anxious parent, that the relative positions of the two extremely handsome persons then present was the more advantageous as regarded that which I knew to be his ulterior object.

As I glanced my eye over the board, and round the room, I saw that every thing had been done to exalt the Rectory and its inmates in the opinion of its new visitor. The candelabrum (the design a fac-simile of Pompey's Pillar) which never made its appearance except upon state occasions, and was therefore always called by the *quasi* butler, the "Pompous Pillar," graced the centre of the table, while the dark polished sideboard groaned with every article of plate that belonged to the family, from flagons and cups, down to the Rector's silver spurs, which, coming under the general order to have out all the plate, lay resting amongst the rest of the ornaments.

Every thing however went well; the dinner was excellent of its kind; the soup—the criterion of second-rate cookery—was capital; every thing was hot and well dressed; and the affair was managed “all without hurry or bustle,” but, as I pretty well knew, most certainly not “without care.” The wine was in the best possible order, and Captain Cavendish Lorimer pronounced the champaign perfect. In fact, to do him justice, he praised everything; and as he warmed with the agreeable conversation of his host (who was as gay and lively as ever I saw him), became one of the most delightful companions I ever encountered. That one person of the party still entirely coincided in my opinion there could be little doubt, and the devoted and smiling attention with which he listened to the slightest suggestion of the young lady, so different from the *brusquerie* of the absent red-fisted lieutenant, had in the short space of the hour and a half during which the ladies remained with us, either rendered the said lieutenant odious by comparison, or exiled him from her thoughts entirely.

Wells was so good a tactician, that finding the sort of person he had to deal with, and that Captain Cavendish Lorimer was a man of general information, and as it seemed of general accomplishments, he drew him out upon all the topics which came under discussion during the stay of Fanny and her mother, in order to make that impression upon his daughter's heart, which he was so anxious it should receive. Wells was clearly of the opinion that the gallant Captain, like Lamprias, became more eloquent and more agreeable, and showed off to greater advantage, as the grape-juice moderately circulated; and that while the cup travelled with the conversation, we might be merry and wise together—and until he gave the hint—contrary to the rule of some other establishments — Mrs. Wells dare not stir.

Upon the present occasion nobody seemed to wish to move. "I assure you," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "the initiation of to-day into the kindness and hospitality of Blissfold, is most delightful; and, during the stroll I have

taken this morning, I have seen so many tempting bits for a sketcher, that as the spring opens, and the trees by a strange inversion of nature begin to put on their clothing, I shall find plenty of amusement for my mornings."

"Do you draw, Captain Lorimer?" said Fanny.

"In my way, Miss Wells," replied the Captain; "I am no very great proficient, but I have made a few attempts which I shall be too proud to show you."

"You are very good," said Fanny.

"I honestly confess time does not hang very heavy upon my hands even when alone," continued our agreeable friend; "musick and drawing are great aids to men who are sometimes destined to solitude."

"What," said Wells, determined to have a catalogue of his qualifications published as soon as possible, "are you a musician too——?"

"The flute is my favourite instrument," replied the graceful Crichton.

"And do you sing?" said Fanny, with an

expression of countenance which a hobbardehoy of seventeen could scarcely have mistaken.

“ A little,” replied our new friend.

In fact, it seemed that Captain Cavendish Lorimer was armed at all points ; and nothing remained, as I saw Wells thought, but to put his various accomplishments to the test at as early a period as possible.

“ Well, Captain Lorimer,” said the Rector, “ you will find under this humble roof, all materials for drawing, instruments for playing, guns for shooting, bows, arrows, fishing-rods, spears, nets, a billiard-table——”

As this inventory went on, I could not but recall all that had been said to *me* so short a time previous, and under somewhat similar circumstances ; not that I believe Wells made all these tempting offers merely as baits to his trap, for he was inherently and constitutionally hospitable, and loved society—agreeable society if he could get it—but society at any rate——

——“ And,” added he——“ luncheon at half-past one precisely, every day, Sunday excepted,

when my duties occupy me more particularly. So, Captain Lorimer, here we *are* as you see, and if you like us, as you find us, you will always find us the same."

"You are too good, Sir," said Lorimer, bowing gracefully and graciously; "I shall be too happy to avail myself of your hospitality. As to billiards, I confess myself exceedingly fond of the game; do *you* play billiards, Miss Wells?"

"Oh no," said Fanny, "sometimes in joke with Papa."

"And then, Captain Lorimer," continued Wells, "if a rubber at whist in the evening *should* be agreeable——"

"A thousand thanks," said Lorimer.

"We can always make up a rubber—we have a worthy wight here who plays whist, billiards, flute, and everything else—our apothecary.

"My dear," said Mrs. Wells—"he——"

"My dear," replied the Rector, "there is nothing like having a man who will make up a rubber, or play billiards, or accompany a song, or sing one—he is an universal utilitarian."

"Mr. Sniggs, I presume," said the Captain.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Wells, "how do you know his name?"

"Oh," replied Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "I very soon find out the history of my *locale*."

Fanny felt herself colouring up, and thinking of Merman.

"But in the present case no great credit is due to my sagacity or activity, for I had the pleasure of a visit from Mr. Sniggs almost immediately after the Rector left me."

"Well," said Mrs. Wells, "he may be a very good whist-player—but as for a child of mine——"

—"My dear love," said the Rector, interrupting, "we were only speaking of him as a whist-player."

The Captain, who saw there was a difference of opinion as to the professional merits of Sniggs existed between his host and hostess, again said, addressing Fanny across the table with one of those teeth-showing smiles in which he rejoiced—

"Are *you* a whist-player, Miss Wells?"

"No," said Fanny, "I know very little of the game, and it is most disagreeable to *me* to think that by any mistake or indiscretion of mine I may involve my partner."

"That's kindly felt," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer; "if all ladies in the world thought in the same way, there would be much more happiness in society."

Fanny looked foolish, and Wells looked pleased; and I, whose spirits were not sufficiently good to mingle in the war of words, thought it was quite time for Mrs. Wells and Fanny to retire; for, whether it was that I was "behind the scenes," or not, I cannot say, but it appeared to me, that Wells was playing his game so coarsely and even unskilfully, that unless Captain Cavendish Lorimer happened to be extremely dull, which he evidently was *not*, he must soon see through the whole plot. It certainly did not appear that he was as yet conscious of any scheme or device on the part of my father-in-law, for he gave in to all his suggestions with an amiable readiness which delighted the Rector, while his

appeal to Fanny upon almost every subject started, made with a respectful *empressement* to which she was wholly unaccustomed, satisfied her that if he were not the most delightful creature upon earth, Captain Cavendish Lorimer was certainly the best-bred, most elegant man she had ever met—"and so handsome, mamma!"

At length the parting hem was given, and the ladies prepared to unsettle themselves for the drawing-room.

"Have the billiard-room lighted," added Wells to his lady's directions — "we must have a rubber——"

"If," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, who seemed in no degree desirous to conceal his accomplishments, "it would amuse you, Miss Wells, to look over my sketches, made in the course of two or three long tours, and you would take the trouble to order one of your servants to go over to my lodgings, my man will give him the *porte-feuille*."

"Oh you are so good, Captain Lorimer," said Mrs. Wells.

"Oh dear," said Fanny, "a thousand thanks."

"But in that case, I am afraid, I must give you some additional trouble," added Captain Cavendish Lorimer; "for in order to preserve my unfortunate performances from a general rummage, I keep the *porte-feuille* locked—I must therefore worry you with this ring, which contains the key that opens it.——"

Saying which, he drew from one of the fingers of a hand, quite the reverse of Merman's in appearance, a ring, containing a Bramah key, which presented itself on touching a spring; in the explanation of the machinery of which, as described by the gallant officer, it struck me Fanny took a very particular interest. After two or three experimental openings and shuttings, Fanny pronounced herself a proficient, and the ladies retired; Captain Cavendish Lorimer standing with the door in his hand bowing unutterable things.

"Come, Captain Lorimer," said the Rector, as the gallant officer concluded his duty—"let us draw round the fire and make ourselves snug,

not exactly after the fashion of the worthy head of my college, who used to say—‘ Come, boys, now let’s be jolly, and no talking.’ I am extremely glad to see you, Sir; Gurney put up that claret—and then we’ll have a log on the fire, and a fresh bottle on the table.”

“ Charming daughter yours, Mr. Wells,” said Lorimer, filling his glass, and bowing over it.

“ Oh, you are very kind,” said Wells, filling *his*; “ they are good girls—our friend here can answer for one—the elder sister of Fanny, whom you see to-night.”

“ I can indeed,” said I.

“ Let’s drink her health, Captain Lorimer,” said the Rector, “ and the young heir of Ashmead.”

This, I confess, seemed to me to be carrying the joke a little too far. The idea of drinking the health of my poor infant as heir to a place, out of which, in all probability, we should all be turned in the course of the next week, appeared absurd in the highest degree; and more parti-

cularly absurd, because if what I felt certain would occur, *did* actually happen, our ejection and abandonment of the place would—if he chanced to recollect the present toast—go a considerable way towards exposing my flighty father-in-law's improvident mode of talking to our young cavalier.

“Ashmead,” said Captain Lorimer, “is that the extremely pretty place on the rise of the hill, just going out of the town?”

“Yes,” said I.

“I was quite delighted with it,” said the Captain; “in summer it must be perfectly beautiful.”

“I shall be too happy if you will do me the honour of coming to look at it,” said I—the same sickening feeling of doubt checking the earnestness of my invitation.

“I say Gurney,” said the Rector, “let us send and ask Sniggs to come over, he will be delightful; he really is an agreeable companion, and a dab at billiards.”

I made no objection—of course the Captain

made none—and a message was sent to Sniggs requesting the pleasure of his company, *if* he were disengaged.

If? as if under the circumstances—the reconciliatory character of the bidding, the knowledge that Captain Cavendish Lorimer dined at the Rectory, (a fact of which he was sure to be informed,) the opportunity of making his way, and though last, not least, the certainty of an agreeable evening, there could possibly exist the slightest doubt as to the answer—it was, in fact, a command, and accordingly was promptly obeyed; so that before the then circulating bottle was empty, Sniggs made a fourth round the fire, and the party seemed well disposed to remain for a certain time where they were.

Wells, however, who loved snugness and conviviality, never lost sight of his great end. Comfortable as we were, I in a moment saw that “one bottle more” would close the performances in the dining-room, at least for that session. He saw that Fan had made an effect on Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and that Captain Cavendish

Lorimer had in a very short time gone a long way towards superseding his gallant predecessor ; so, when ordering the next bottle of claret he announced it to be the last, adding with a nudge to his guest——

“ We will go to the ladies after *this*—but it is a custom in this house, Captain Lorimer, to have a snug re-union a little later in the evening, and that is my reason for dining early ; coffee—tea—*chasse*—a game at billiards—a rubber at whist—a little music or whatever is going on—and then a little bit of snug supper—cold or hot, as the case may be ; eat or not as you like ; sociability is the thing ; I learned it as a boy from my excellent father—all cosey—shut out the world—no servants—no fuss—and a small taste of what we used in my boyish days to call ‘ mixture ’—not such as my friend Sniggs would prescribe—but a little hot, strong, and sweet—just every one after his own fancy, and a bit of quiet chat—what d’ye think, Captain ? ”

“ It seems a most admirable arrangement,” said the Captain, “ and I do assure you, my

dear Sir, you will find me one of the most accommodating of human beings whenever you make suggestions so exceedingly agreeable."

I looked at my father-in-law, and the new comer, and could not help recollecting, although I certainly did not regret, the brandy-and-water which I drank in the very same room on that night which sealed my earthly destiny with my beloved Harriet.

Wells, who was in high spirits, and anxious to render himself, his house, and everything that was his, agreeable to the splendid acquisition he had made, took the lead, and went a-head of Sniggs, who, however much pleased with the olive branch which the Rector had held out in the shape of an invitation, still evidently felt that kind of awkwardness and shyness which hang over a man who has, to say the best of it, played a rather equivocal part. Wells had told us all his favourite stories, new and entertaining in the highest degree to the new arrival, and by *him* received with great delight. In short, I saw that my father-in-law had planted

his first hit with great effect, and that Captain Cavendish Lorimer was, to use an expression which the late Tom Falwasser would have adopted with regard to linnets, finches, sparrows, and such small deer, "limered;" and it must be owned that this was the "*limæ labor*" in which Wells did mightily rejoice.

Time flew; but Mrs. Wells, who left the management of such matters as she knew were in hand at this present juncture, entirely in charge of the Rector, never ventured to send any summons to coffee or tea; nor was it till Wells thought the moment had arrived at which he ought to repair to the drawing-room, that he rang the bell and inquired if coffee were ready? The simple affirmative monosyllable settled the business, and after a very slight delay we proceeded to do what is called "joining the ladies."

"Oh," cried Fanny, as Captain Cavendish Lorimer entered the room, "I never saw such loves of drawings, Captain Lorimer, really they are perfectly beautiful."

"They are like the places they represent, I believe," said the Captain, with profound humility.

"And," said Fanny, giving him back his ring with the key in it, which she had kept cuddled up in her hand till it was quite hot, "here is your dear beautiful little ring."

"It is very convenient," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "it lies in so small a compass."

And then Captain Cavendish Lorimer took coffee, sipped it, and put the cup down gently upon a small mosaic table and drank no more; and then Wells looked at his wife, and made a family signal that the coffee was evidently ill-made, because Captain Cavendish Lorimer could not finish it; and then my dear mother-in-law was just on the point of going into a discussion on the art of coffee-making, and the reason why it could not be made good if the coffee-pot were not one thing, or the biggin not another thing, and so on, but a sudden check, in the way of a sharp contraction of brow on the part of her spouse, stopped *that*—and Captain Cavendish

Lorimer slyly stealing away from the abandoned cup, sat himself on a sofa beside Fanny, and drank his chasse of Curacoa as if he had regularly qualified for it.

Sniggs and I strolled into the billiard-room, which, as I have already remarked, opened into the drawing-room, and began knocking the balls about. The Captain, attracted by the sound, left Fanny's side and joined us.

"Pshaw," said Wells, "that silly fellow Sniggs is so fond of billiards—dear me—why not have waited? Captain Lorimer, do you take tea?"

"None, thank you," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "I am all for one game at billiards: I haven't played a game these ten months."

And so Sniggs, as champion, was put forth to compete with the stranger.

"Fanny, dear," said Wells, "go and mark; make yourself useful."

Fanny hesitatingly, but I believe "nothing loth," proceeded to the marker's place, to which her father had consigned her, in order that she might at once evince a due degree of interest in

the success of Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and exhibit the graces of her pretty figure, and the delicacy of her very white hand in the performance of a duty not in the abstract altogether feminine in its character, but with which, knowing whom I had to deal with, I dare not interfere.

The game proceeded rapidly—Sniggs went on manfully and scored a few, but all in vain; Captain Cavendish Lorimer stretched himself out—screwed—twisted—and did everything that chalk and genius combined could possibly achieve,

“ And soon all the cannons
Were Major Mac Shannon's.”

In fact, off the balls when he once got them, did Captain Cavendish Lorimer win the game.

“ I have no chance,” said Sniggs, “ none in the least.”

“ Nobody else *can* have any,” said Wells; “ for you beat everybody here : so, come Fan, let us have a little music.”

I saw Captain Cavendish Lorimer at this suggestion look rather disconcerted, and the doubting hesitation of Fanny did not, as I thought, meet with quite so much persuasion as might be expected. For the information of those who *know* the regular course of proceeding adopted by country Misses in such a case, it is of no use writing down an elaborate account of the screwing up or down of the creaking music-stool, the rumpling over a hundred songs as if to look out, off-hand, for something to sing, the said girl having made up her mind to sing no other than the one at which she has been thumping and screaming all the morning: humming and ha'aing during the pretended search, and talking of a cold, and declaring that she can't—really—and a thousand other little essays of rustic affectation, which I saw operated upon the Captain not exactly as my father-in-law could have wished. However, at last, Fanny *would* sing a duet if Captain Cavendish Lorimer would take a part. “Oh! too happy,” was the answer, and out they came with the beautiful English, “Oh!

Nanny wilt thou gang with me !” a bit of sweet melody which will win the heart whenever it is heard ; although, perhaps, in twenty years from this time it may never be heard at all.

Fanny sang her part well ; the Captain’s second was perfect ; the expression he threw into the words thrilled through the poor girl’s heart. I saw it, and I did not wonder, for I had never heard such amateur singing in my life. Sniggs was in raptures, and poor dear Mrs. Wells, who was far behind her spouse in worldliness, with all a mother’s feeling, and wholly regardless of the object of the Captain’s invitation, could not help saying to me. “ Well, I *do* wish dear Bessy was here !”

Sniggs after this very good-naturedly played an air, with variations, on the flute, and met with well-merited praise. Captain Cavendish Lorimer suggested to him some other subject, which he did not exactly recollect. Captain Cavendish Lorimer took up the instrument, and in explaining to our medical man what he meant, played the air he had in vain endeavoured to

recall to his memory, in a tone and style so perfectly beautiful, that Fanny sat entranced as she watched him, although, it must be admitted, that the handsomest countenance that ever was formed suffers most marvellously by the twist of the eyes and the screw of the mouth, which seem to be essential to the ejaculation of sweet sounds in such a performance.

However the impression was that another Crichton had come to Blissfold, and we wondered and worshipped, and everything went sweetly well, until a quotation made by Captain Cavendish Lorimer gave affairs a turn infinitely more delightful to Wells, and, which I confess, startled *me*. The occasion was this:—

“I remember,” said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, “that air once haunted me. I heard it sung by an extremely charming girl, now dead; but I declare there was something so fascinating in it to me, that I fell desperately in love with her before she had finished it.”

“What!” said Fanny archly, but as I believe

innocently, "is there really such a thing as love at first sight."

"This case," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "was one of love at first *hearing*; but you don't doubt, Miss Wells, the possibility of the other. Don't you know what La Bruyère says upon that subject? 'Love,' says he, 'seizes on us suddenly without giving warning, and our disposition or weakness favours the surprise: one glance, one look from the fair, fixes and determines us. Friendship, on the contrary, is a long time in forming; it is of slow growth, through many trials and months of familiarity. How much wit, good-nature, indulgencies! how many good offices and civilities are required among friends to accomplish, in some years, what a lovely face or fair hand does in a minute!'"

Fanny looked foolish again—Wells again was pleased, and Captain Cavendish Lorimer again showed his white teeth most complacently. Mrs. Wells looked at *me*, as much to say, "Well, that's pretty plain;" and Sniggs, from a dark

corner of the room, was reconnoitring the Captain with his glass.

The time had now arrived when the supper was announced, so called by the "Butler," but to which Wells wished never to give a specific name. The moment Mrs. Wells whispered the soft intention to Captain Cavendish Lorimer, he appeared quite delighted; again offered her his arm, and again led her to the room which we seemed scarcely to have quitted. I again took Fanny.

"Isn't he delightful?" whispered she.

"Rather better than Merman," said I.

"Merman!" said she; and that was all she said; but the tone and manner settled it.

"Isn't he capital?" said Sniggs, who brought up the rear.

"Capital, indeed," said I.

And on we walked: and there I saw the *fac-simile* of the never-to-be-forgotten table—everything nice and snug—grilled fowl—broiled bones—oysters—potted things of sorts—pickles and

other condiments, and the huge set of case bottles, all as usual; and Wells as agreeable as ever, the Captain delighted, Sniggs in better spirits, Fanny happy, her mother gay and cheerful, and everything *couleur de rose*.

Having despatched the edible part of the banquet, in came the huge reservoir of hot water, tumblers, sugar, lemons, and every device conducive to innocent conviviality, when the slightest possible hitch in our merriment occurred.

“What shall I give you, Captain Lorimer?” said Wells.

“What is in those bottles?” asked the Captain.

“That,” said Wells, “is cherry-brandy.”

“Oh!” said the Captain, bowing somewhat reverentially to the bottle, “that is rather beyond *me*. I suppose, Mr. Sniggs (addressing the unhappy apothecary who sat next him), you don’t recommend cherry-brandy by way of a cure to your patients?”

“No, no,” said Sniggs, falteringly, “certainly not.”

And a dead silence followed. What Captain Cavendish Lorimer could have thought of the effect which his innocent and playful question produced I do not presume to surmise; but it effectually damped poor Sniggs, who, with the proverbial appropriativeness of small people, fancied the allusion personal to himself, and could not divest himself of the idea that the calamity which had befallen "Gunpowder Tom" had formed a subject of conversation before he arrived, and that in all probability he had been invited on purpose to be affronted. This littleness in little minds, which I have before noticed, and which is so well illustrated by Scrub in the "Beaux' Stratagem," he could not conquer, and, consequently rolled himself up in his shell, and thereafter said nothing.

To Wells this unsociability was no matter of regret, as it gave him an opportunity of rattling away in his best style; and when I saw the smoking kettle arrive, and the vast display for the "Spirit-mingling," I said to myself, "now is my respectable connexion in his glory."

Soon after this, and when Captain Cavendish Lorimer, who to all the softer and more polished attributes of an agreeable companion, appeared to me to add a turn for conviviality, which in another twenty years, perhaps, may be considered wholly incompatible with grace and elegance, had filled his glass, the sound of wheels announced the arrival of the carriage, bringing home Bessy, and which was to carry me home. Fanny heard it as well as I, and I never saw anxiety and perturbation more strongly marked on a countenance than in her's the moment it struck upon her ears. The certainty that she had caught a heart, or that she *should* catch it, if nothing intervened to break the present link of the snare, was suddenly marred by the dread of Bessy's appearance in the dinner-parlour, where the social board was spread. I saw that she felt something decisive must be done to prevent the possibility of the young beauty's intrusion to the probable demolition of all she had done during the course of the evening, in the siege upon Captain Cavendish Lorimer's admiration

and affection. She was ready for action in a moment, and, jumping up, said to her mother in an audible whisper—"Hadn't I better go and see if dear Bessy would like to come and take some wine and water?"

Mamma was going in a straightforward way to desire her to sit down, for that Bessy would not come in; but Wells, apprehending the real cause of Fan's solicitation to be the desire of "making assurance doubly sure," and unequivocally preventing the irruption, nodded his head somewhat significantly at his better half, and said, "No, no, let her go and see," which accordingly she did.

And then did I not hear the pattering of feet over head along the passages to the bed-rooms, and did it not remind me of the deciding night of my life; and did not Captain Cavendish Lorimer look surprised at the mimic thunder which rolled over his head? "Ah!" thought I, "little do you fancy the effect which that, to *you*, mysterious noise, has upon *me*." Wells saw that the Captain's attention had been roused by

the sound, and forthwith enlightened him on the subject, by remarking that in houses of that age and construction it was scarcely possible to stir without being heard, adding, that the present move was occasioned by the return home of one of his little girls from her sister's.

In the pause which Fanny's departure seemed to have caused in the conversation, and which Sniggs, whatever he did with his glass, did not seem at all inclined to fill up, Mrs. Wells, by way of making talk, expressed a hope that Captain Cavendish Lorimer found the rooms at Hickson's tolerably convenient.

"Why, pretty well," said the Captain, smiling; "I cannot say *much* for them; but it does not signify, for the short time I shall occupy them."

"Short time?" said Wells, in a tone of surprise, and I thought of disappointment; "I thought you were fixed here for some time."

"So I am," said the Captain, "but not *there*. I want more space, and my father's exceeding liberality enables me to do as I like; for, although, he insists on my following up my profession

and being a soldier for good and all, to the end of the chapter, his allowances are on a scale calculated to soften down all the little rubs and *désagréments* incidental to a military life when they *are* to be overcome. No; I was looking at a very nice place about a quarter of a mile further down the river which I saw was to be let—a white house—with remarkably good stables, which is a great point with me. I forget what they call it.”

“ Slatfords ?” said Mr. Wells, hesitatingly.

“ That is the name,” said the Captain. “ There is one room, a bow-windowed room, the view from which, in the summer, must be beautiful.”

“ But, surely,” said Wells, “ that will be more of a house than you want, Captain Lorimer ?”

“ No,” said the Captain, “ I don’t think so. I expect Mrs. Lorimer and the children here in a week or ten days, and I must get some place for them ready for their arrival.”

The effect which these words produced upon the assembled party was something marvellous ; it

seemed as if sudden paralysis had seized the Rector and his wife—they sat, for the moment, transfixed. Sniggs looked at *me*—the Captain did not seem to notice the scene, and Wells was too much a man of the world to retain his fixed position more than an instant.

“ Oh !” said the Rector, playfully, “ I did not know you were a Benedick, Captain ; this is delightful—a family like yours will be indeed an acquisition in our quiet neighbourhood—umph—only think.”

“ Yes,” said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, “ I have been married four years, and am the venerable parent of two daughters and a son.”

“ Well, to be sure !” said Mrs. Wells, recollecting the useless display of dinner, dessert, the pompous pillar, and all the rest of it, not to speak of her husband’s cordial greetings, and her daughter’s winning smiles.

In the midst of this *embarras*, Fanny returned, having evidently been re-touching her curls, re-smoothing her eyebrows, and re-biting her lips, and, resuming her seat, informed us that Bessy

declined our offer of wine and water, and was gone to bed.

“ She might just as well have come in here,” said Mamma.

“ She is tired, Ma,” said Fan.

“ Poor girl,” said Wells.

“ Pray, Captain Lorimer,” said Fanny, “ may I ask a great favour ?”

“ It is granted already, Miss Wells,” said the Captain.

“ Will you let me keep your beautiful drawings for an hour or two to-morrow to show them to my sister ? I have been talking of them to her, and she is so anxious——”

“ Oh ! pray keep them as long as you like,” said the Captain. “ I must, however, leave my talisman in your custody too ;” saying which the Captain once more drew from his finger the mystic ring, and handed it to his fair friend.

Wells saw the game poor Fanny was playing, and felt very anxious to put a stop to it, since it could be played to no end.

"Pray," said the Rector, "what do they ask for Slatfords?"

"Two hundred a-year furnished," said the Captain, "if taken by the year, and five guineas a week by the week, and for the spring or summer. I don't think it dear."

"What!" said Fanny, who, in the true spirit of castle-building, saw the great comfort and convenience of a residence so near the Rectory, also mixed up in her mind with a vision of something she could scarcely tell what. "Are you going to take Slatfords, Captain Lorimer?"

"I think so," said the Captain. "I was very much pleased with it."

"But, I suppose," said Wells, "you would hardly venture without Mrs. Lorimer's concurrence?"

"Oh! I assure you," said the Captain, "I have no great fears of Fanny's difference of opinion."

This observation of her father's, and the Captain's answer, and the name of Fanny, puzzled my poor sister-in-law more than anything that had preceded it. She knew, by experience,

how rapidly he made up marriages, and the time and place which he generally selected for the performance, and as the *dénouement* had occurred during a very short absence on her part, she was perfectly bewildered.

“What do you mean by Mrs. Lorimer?” said Fanny, looking very archly at the Captain.

“Why, my dear,” said Wells, “Captain Lorimer is married, and expects his lady and family here next week; and, naturally enough wants to find a house fit to receive them.”

Fanny was not so good an actress as her father was an actor. There could be no doubt, whatever, as to what was passing in her mind at that moment; indeed, I was rejoiced to find that she kept her place and position at table, for I was very apprehensive of a scene, in order to avoid which, as much as possible, I announced the necessity of my getting home—it was growing late—and the weather was cold for the horses, and so on; upon which the Captain looking at his watch, started from his seat, and declared that he did not think it had

been eleven o'clock, instead of nearly one; and then began the ceremony of leave-taking, and cloak-hunting, and all the rest of it, which ended, the Captain and Sniggs walked off to their separate destinations, and I remained for a few minutes behind the scenes after the performance was over, and when the actors appeared in their natural character.

"Well," said my mother-in-law, "who would have thought that that young man was married, and had a family?"

"Odd enough," said Wells. "It never occurred to me to ask the question."

"The Captain enjoyed himself," said I.

"I don't believe he is a Captan," said Fanny. "Being a Light-bob, he wears wings, so one can't tell."

I admired my sister-in-law's military knowledge.

"He is very handsome," said Mrs. Wells.

"La, Ma," said Fanny; "what, with that long nose!"

"His nose is not longer," said Wells, "than

it was before dinner, Fanny, and *then* you thought him remarkably handsome; but you must mind and send back the drawings after Bessy has seen them."

"Oh! hang his drawings!" said Fanny. "Bessy don't want to see them; besides, she can draw better herself—they are odious things."

"And his singing?" said I.

"His voice is well enough," said Fanny: "but that is not what *I* call singing."

"In short," said Wells, "he is a very odious fellow."

"No, I don't mean that, Pa," said Fanny, "What I mean is—he—is——"

"Married," said I. "Come, Fanny, that's the truth."

"Well, I know it is the truth," said Fanny; "he *is* married, and who cares?"

"Never mind," said Wells, "let us get to bed: we have had a very pleasant day, and have made a very pleasant acquaintance, and so good night to all."

“ Good night, Gilbert,” said Fanny. “ All I think is, that it is very foolish for officers in the army to marry so young.—Good night!—love to Harriet.”

And so brake we up this *sederunt*. And I honestly confess that I was not altogether sorry to find my worthy father-in-law caught in his own trap, after having baited it so sumptuously for Captain Cavendish Lorimer.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN I was on my return homewards, I felt myself in a very awkward predicament; the signal defeat of my reverend father-in-law's great scheme was something too good to keep to myself, and yet the difficulty which arose in my mind as to making Harriet, at least in some degree, a participator in my views of the subject, suggested itself mainly because as she, I knew, would inevitably feel there existed a great similitude in the case of Captain Cavendish Lorimer and Fanny to that of Mr. Gilbert Gurney and Harriet; and, moreover, the defeated manœuvrer was her own respectable and respected, revered and reverend parent;—still I was sure, unless

by some exceedingly good turn of fortune she should happen to be asleep when I got to Ashmead, it would be utterly impossible for me to betake myself to my slumbers, without giving her a slight sketchy outline of the evening's proceedings.

I confess I was not sorry for having witnessed those proceedings : for, although I certainly experienced no malicious enjoyment at the frustration of a very laudable undertaking on the Rector's part, I felt my mind relieved and fitter for the more important business of the morning ; for I judged that the information from Nubley could not be longer delayed ; indeed, as it was, I attributed his backwardness in writing to a disinclination to wound our feelings, until he could no longer avoid doing so by a communication of the facts connected with poor Cuthbert's disasters.

As fate would have it, Harriet's kind watchfulness for my return had kept her awake, and, being so, it was natural enough for her to inquire how the day had gone off ; so I told

her truly and exactly the progress of the banquet, the history of the drawings, so the ring, and the key, and the *portefeuille*, and the singing, and the fluting, and the cold-meating, and the hot-drinking, reserving to the very last moment the fact of our new Adonis being married. She professed herself angry at my procrastination of the *dénouement*, but I could quite understand that she was not entirely sorry for the result, her opinion being that Fanny's ready forgetfulness of the man to whom, let him be what he might, she had been devotedly attached, and moreover, positively engaged, was, to say the least of it, extremely undignified: why, I never could discover. It might have been fickleness—it might have been levity—it might have been a sort of vengeance which prompted so sudden a transfer of her affections; but what dignity had to do with it, I really could not clearly comprehend.

In the midst of my calculations thereanent I fell asleep, dreamt I saw Nubley with his spectacles on his nose, and a pair of wings

on his shoulders, refreshing with water from a large watering-pot a rose-tree, the buds of which were all like the face of my brother Cuthbert; while little Hull, in a sky-blue jacket and trousers, was playing leap-frog with Mrs. Brandyball in the distance. "If, while we sleep," says Franklin, "we can have any pleasing dreams, it is, as the French say, *tant gagné*, so much added to the pleasure of life." Certainly my dreams during the night in question were, at all events, amusing; but, inasmuch as I did not see Nubley the next morning, somewhat disappointing.

When the next, to me dreadfully long, day had worn itself out, and neither Nubley, nor intelligence from him arrived, I really grew seriously uneasy, and Mrs. Nubley kept up a perpetual "lauking" about Mr. N. being "such a man!" and I made up my mind, let what might be the consequence, to start for Bath on the morrow, the moment after the post had arrived. Even that seemed a dreadful delay. Nubley's kindness of disposition, and earnestness of good-

will towards me, rendered the idea of neglectfulness on his part out of the question, and, as Harriet judiciously enough said, "If he had anything to communicate, rely upon it he would write; if matters were desperate, and he could be of no use, he would return; and if your presence were necessary, or could be serviceable, he would send for you."

I admitted the cogency of my dear Harriet's reasoning, although she could only reason upon what she knew, and suffered myself to be amused by her sister Fanny with a proceeding which her favourite maid, Miss Sally Kerridge, had taken during the morning; having first asked her young mistress's advice upon the point, but having previously made up her own mind beyond the power of change or alteration.

Fanny accepted the offer of counsellor, heard Kerridge's statement, satisfied herself as to the girl's wishes and inclination, and gave her decision in favour of the proposed measure, which was no sooner pronounced than Sally proceeded to her reverend pastor and master, and, with all

the blushes requisite upon such an occasion, and a smile that was half a tear, insinuated her desire that he would be good enough to publish the bans of matrimony between herself, the said Sally Kerridge, and William Waggle, the young baker, against whose winning ways and white jacket her *ci-devant* admirer Mr. Lazenby had so amicably given her warning.

Fanny gave us the history of this affair with a good deal of archness, and when Harriet, upon her "dignity" principle, I suppose, began censuring poor Sally Kerridge for the rapidity with which she had surrendered her heart to a new suitor, it struck me that Fanny did not join in the attack with any very great energy; but that, on the contrary, she reverted to the *mistake* of the preceding evening, as to Captain Cavendish Lorimer, with the full sense of Sally's being, in her *grade*, much better off than her young mistress. At all events, in her defence against our raillery upon the error under which she had laboured with regard to the Benedick, she made no scruple of admitting that she *did*

think him very delightful, when she saw no reason why she might *not* think so ; but that now it was of no use for us to worry her, nor any for *her* to worry *herself*; and, of course, she thought no more about him.

It may easily be imagined that it cost me no little effort to affect to take an interest in the current matters of Blissfold, with a mind occupied not only with the important affairs in progress at Bath, but borne down by the struggle I had to maintain silence on the subject towards my wife, from whom I had scarcely before kept a secret since our marriage.

The longest day will have an end, and night again close in. Again the sun rose—again the post arrived, and amongst other communications, a very long letter from Nubley ; so long, indeed, that I consider it better to put in my notes the essence of the communication, than its whole substance.

Nubley received the announcement of the failure of the house of Chipps, Rice, and Hicory with great composure, because, although

his dealings with them had been various and extensive, he, with that worldly and prudential activity as regarded nature's first law—self-preservation, had, upon quitting the “city of palaces,” washed his hands—to use his own phrase—of the whole concern, and, having a certain and well-founded faith in the funds of his native country, converted all the profits of his sultry exile into three per cent. consols, which having purchased at a war price, with heavy taxes, an enormous army and an extensive navy, and the quartern loaf at eighteen pence halfpenny to help him, put him pretty much at his ease as times mended; all his landed property consisting of Chittagong, where his attempts at farming had been crowned with successes only to be equalled in their results by his experiment of letting the property to the Thompson family.

But, after having very tranquilly and philosophically perused the details of the Calcutta crash, the good, kind-hearted old man suddenly felt alarm lest Cutibert might, either by the

plausible persuasion of the partners, or, which seemed even more probable, by his own helplessness and consequent apparent carelessness in the management of his affairs, have permitted his realised capital to remain in their charge, not altogether unmindful that twelve per cent., which the enterprising speculators were in the habit of giving for large deposits, was, in point of fact, a better return for capital, at least nominally, than three. The moment the idea struck him, out he went, and, as if invigorated by the warmth of his feelings, walked off to Montpelier to question his old friend and former partner upon this most interesting and vital topic.

Arrived there, after some little delay, he was admitted to an audience with Cuthbert, but under a heavy fire of frowns from the Brandyball. This sort of shotted salute—after the fashion of olden times, when powder without ball was considered no compliment—Nubley bore with immoveable fortitude, although he was not exactly prepared to understand why the increased weight of displeasure was fulminated against him, till

he discovered in the sequel that, at the moment of his arrival, a barber from Bath was in attendance upon Cuthbert for the purpose, in the first place, of denuding his head of the few locks which time had turned to grey and left, and of fitting on it in their place a gay, light, curly wig, ample in its ringlets, and juvenile in its tint, in which he was to appear as bridegroom at the approaching ceremony.

It was pretty clear to me from what Nubley wrote in his letter that he must unconsciously have talked to Mrs. Brandyball about Samson and Delilah, but whatever might have been the nature or character of his "oozings out," no doubt could remain of his having set the lady in an unquenchable flame of rage by his unexpected intrusion at what, when she was fine, she called her seminary.

Cuthbert himself was considerably annoyed to be detected by his old partner as he was, or nearly was, in the fitting on of a matrimonial head-dress, knowing as he did the opinion which the said old partner entertained of the new

partnership into which he was about to enter, or at least of the person about to be admitted into the firm, was certainly not altogether agreeable.

“ You had better leave the room for the present,” said the lady to the *perruquier*; “ the gentleman will not stay long, and you can come in again and finish by-and-by.”

“ Why, as to the matter of that,” said Nubley, “ I am not quite so sure that my visit to-day *will* be so short, for I have a great deal to say to my friend on business.”

“ Oh, Nubley,” said Cuthbert, “ don’t talk of business—eh?—no—I have quitted business, and done with every thing connected with it.”

“ You have, indeed !” said Nubley; “ and finely you have done ! However, you *must* listen. —*I wish that old Jezebel would go and leave us.*”

“ Mr. Nubley,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “ the inadvertency of your manner, and the unconscious communication of your private ideas, sufficiently assure me of your opinion of me, and of your anxiety to prejudice Mr. Cuthbert

against me: but it is too late; the die is cast, and therefore you will forgive me for merely insinuating that, however much your efforts may contribute to irritate Mr. Cuthbert's gentle temper and disorder his tranquillity, they will produce no change in his determination."

"May be not, Ma'am," said Nubley; "but that won't stop my tongue, nor hurry my departure."

"My dear friend," said Cuthbert, "evidently disappointed in an attempt at scratching his head (a favourite *delassement* of his) by the intervention of the newly-adapted Brutus, of the presence of which he was perfectly unconscious; "do not speak harshly or unkindly to a lady for whom I have so high a regard, and who has made so many sacrifices for my comfort, who has given up so much for my sake, and who has been to me the kind and affectionate—eh, dear me!—affectionate dispenser of attentions and cares which my dearest relations, and those—eh, dear me!—those who ought to have bestowed

upon me—Oh, dear, dear !—pray do not make me talk.”

“ Dear Mr. Gurney, do not excite yourself,” said Mrs. Brandyball. “ Kitty, dear, where is the eau de Cologne?—Kitty——”

She called, but no Kitty answered, for it turned out that during the stay of the perruquier, she had availed herself of his services in cutting and curling her hair into the likeness of something which she had seen in one of the prints of a “ Magasin de Modes,” which one of her dear friends, Miss Margaret Dryrubber, had brought to school.

“ Eau de Cologne, Ma’am,” said Nubley ; “ that won’t do : I am come here to bring our old friend to a sense of the state of his affairs.”

“ I really do *not* understand what you mean by our old friend,” said Mrs. Brandyball. “ Mr. Cuthbert Gurney is an old friend of *yours* probably, but as I have not had the honour of his acquaintance for any very great length of time, it is more gratifying to me to feel

conscious of the place I hold in his estimation."

I don't want, Ma'am." said Nubley, "to lower you in his estimation: I am not going to talk about you. It is of his own affairs I am about to speak. *I wonder if she will go now.*"

"Oh!" said Cuthbert, again fidgetting at his wig, "don't mind about my affairs now, Nubley—nothing can press—after my marriage—eh dear, eh dear!——"

"Will be too late," said Nubley, with increasing energy. "Why surely, Gurney, you can't expect much comfort in the match you are about to make, if you are not to have the power of listening to a friend who wishes to make a communication. I tell you it is important—we must be alone. *I dare say that if old Sysigambis does go away, she'll clap her ear to the key-hole and listen—eh, don't you see?*"

The moment this "oozing out" had inspired old Sysigambis with the notion that she *might* perhaps advantageously over-hear the dialogue in the mode unconsciously recommended to her

notice by my poor non-retentive friend and advocate, she caught at the idea; and, from the earnestness of Nubley's manner, and his desire to be left alone with Cuthbert, imagining that what he had to say, which he was so unwilling to say while she was present, might be something which would be very important for her to hear, while she was *supposed to be absent*, she threw over her countenance that expression of amiability which was seldom used, except when the anxious parents of her few pupils came to visit their darlings; and which, while it conveyed to the solicitous visitors the most gratifying evidence of her own amiability, also led them to understand that all their nasty, little, cross, ill-conditioned, rude, riotous, and reckless darlings, were the most amiable, intelligent, industrious, and amiable creatures that ever drew breath.

With one of these looks—which, to use Nubley's own words, "might have made one suppose that butter would not melt in her mouth,"—Mrs. Brandyball said, in a simper just playful

enough to show three very white teeth (Bath made) between her ruby lips,—

“You don’t imagine, Mr. Nubley, that any apprehension of a disunion between myself and our excellent friend could induce me to remain present at any period when a friend of your standing wished to make a confidential communication. Indeed, you mistake me; I am aware that upon occasions when an union of this sort is considered—and I admit not unnaturally—as an intrusion into a family, feelings are engendered, for which, in this particular case, there is no ground. I trust we shall know each other better before long, and in the meantime I retire; dear Cuthbert, is there anything you would like in the way of refreshment?”

“Eh dear, no;” said Cuthbert.

Dear devil!—thought Nubley.

“Well,” said the lady, “I do not grow much in your favour, I am afraid; however I must go and look after dear Kate and the hair-cutter, and when I may come back ring the bell and let me know.”

Saying which she swam out of the room in a gay and lively manner, waggling and wriggling herself clear of the door-posts, in a most graceful, and, to say truth, dexterous manner.

"Well," said Cuthbert, "what is the meaning of all this, my dear friend?—I—really—eh—never—interfered—oh dear, dear, my head!"

"That's the wig," said Nubley; "what a goose you must be to clap your old cocoa-nut into a bird's nest; why it don't become you; if you are, like Etna, all fire within and snow at top—why don't you show your snow? however, what I am come to talk about has nothing to do with your marriage—because the dear woman who has just left us would, I am sure, be satisfied with love in a cottage—*it must be a big one*—eh—don't you see?—but—you must make up your mind to something."

"Eh—dear, dear, dear,"—said Cuthbert, "I have made up my mind to everything."

"Yes," said Nubley, "but now—Gurney—supposing, instead of turning all you got with me, and after me, in Calcutta, into good safe

old English stock—you had left all your gains in the hands of a great staring flaring house in Calcutta—to live upon remittances at their nice high rates of interest; hey—if you had done that old boy—what would you have said when you heard that the great staring flaring house had smashed?”

“How d’ye mean smashed?” said Cuthbert.

Hit him there, thought Nubley.—“Why smashed,” said the old gentleman—“don’t you know the word?—suppose now, for instance, that most splendid firm in all the universe, Messrs. Chipps, Rice, Hicory, and Co., celebrated all over the universe from Chowringee to Vipary—eh—don’t you see?—my old boy—*startle him now, eh!*—was to fail—when a man who loves twelve per cent. better than three chooses to leave his tot and tottle in their hands—eh?”

“Fail—eh—what! fail?”—said Cuthbert, pushing up his new wig;—“what should make Chipps, Rice, and Hicory fail?”

What !” said Nubley, “why, not being able to fulfil their engagements—don’t you see?”

“It’s an impossibility,” said Cuthbert, raising himself upon his elbow, “it could not happen—Chipps, Rice, and Hiccory fail?—no.”

“But, Cuthbert,” said Nubley, “there’s nothing impossible to Providence, as they tell us, but gunpowder ashes; suppose they *have* failed—and suppose I have got an account of the failure in *my* pocket.”

“Then,” said Cuthbert, with a deep sigh, and something like an effort to be agitated, “I am a beggar !” A

“So you are, and I knew it,” said Nubley: “you never would listen to my advice—no—there you were like a baby without leading strings; gad—I believe if at any time of your life you had slipped down into a nullah four inches deep, and your head had been but three inches under water, you would have laid on your back and let yourself be drowned rather than make the slightest exertion:—*I wonder how he feels now?*”

"But," said Cuthbert, looking somewhat anxious, "are you sure?—eh—dear—or is it that you have come to tell me this in order to break off this marriage, which neither you nor Gilbert ever approved of."

"Break off," said I, "why should your break down break off the marriage? I am sure, and I am quite sure you are sure, that this Mrs. Brandyball loves you for yourself alone; why else has she made all the sacrifices you talk of, why send away her pupils, why give up all her pursuits? It will be her pride and happiness to exert herself again for your advantage—and Kitty, dear thing, may assist her in it; don't you see?—*I hope the old body is outside listening.*"

"This comes upon me as a great and sudden surprise," said Cuthbert; "I have heard nothing of it myself—and—eh—just give me that tumbler, Nublely; it quite upsets me—I don't understand—I—eh—eh dear."

"The fact is plain enough," said Nublely; "some seven or eight millions of rupees are wanting to settle the affairs of the firm; and a

certain number of men, women and children who, like yourself, are fond of high interest, are left to bite nothing but dust;—however, my dear friend, so long as I have a pice in my purse you shall never feel the effects of the blow.”

“No,” said Cuthbert, “no—I thank you warmly—kindly—eh—but I don’t see—eh—I am all quite bewildered—it is such a change—eh—such an alteration—dear me, I am very hot, Nubley—eh—and are you sure?”

“Oh,” replied Nubley, “here are the letters and documents; the announcement of the fact to you was forwarded to me, because you either forgot or neglected to leave your address in the country—the only question is, what you mean to do?*—that’s the way I’ll work him.*”

“But what *am* I to do?” said Cuthbert; “what will Gilbert do—eh—dear me.”

“Gilbert,” said Nubley, “oh he will do well enough—what makes you think of *him*?—he has offended you—he has driven you away—eh?—*I wonder what he will say to that?*”

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "I have been driven away—eh—but still I never meant—but—what is to be done? I—really."

"Tell your story to your great favourite here, Mrs. Brandyball," said Nubley; "she is a woman of knowledge and experience, and, as you have confided your fate to her keeping, don't you see—eh?—that's what I should recommend—of course after your marriage you will remain here—no need of running away for the honeymoon—eh?—don't you know; and then keep quiet until we see what can be saved out of the ruins."

"Yes," said Cuthbert; "but then—dear, dear—ring the bell my dear Nubley for Hutton—two pulls—eh—if it is not too much trouble—but this really—and—eh."

And at the end of this flurry, poor Cuthbert sank back upon the sofa, and when Hutton came into the room and saw nothing above the back of the couch but the flowing curls with which his unhappy master had been decorated, since he last quitted him, he hesitated as to what he was

to do, and stood looking about him—

“in amazement lost;”

nor was it until Cuthbert's gentle and familiar bleat roused him to a sense of his duty, that he dared approach the young head which he beheld on my brother's old shoulders.

“Some more eau de Cologne, Hutton,” said Cuthbert; “and—eh dear—where is Mrs. Brandyball—and Kitty—and——”

“Yes,” said Nubley, “they may as well know the particulars as far as I have them—besides it will save me the trouble of telling my story twice over.”

“You need not be alarmed about *that*,” said Mrs. Brandyball, entering the little cabinet with Kate; “you talk so loud, at least as it seems to us who are accustomed to Mr. Cuthbert's quietness, that we heard every word you said in the next room.”

“And I'm sure nobody tried to listen,” said Kate; “and so,” continued the lady, “something bad has happened?”

“Yes,” said Cuthbert, “yes—very bad—as

Nubley tells me ; eh—dear, dear—I—am ruined.”

“ I don’t believe a word of it,” said the lady ; “ it is a trumped-up story—it is a plot got up to frighten you out of your marriage and reduce you to be a dependant upon your charming brother and excellent friend : but the scheme will fail—I am quite aware of the attempt—but I tell you it will fail ; for, even were it true as it is false, the change would make no change in *me*—to us, to me, and my dear Kate, should devolve the charge of cheering your existence and of providing the means of rendering you independent of the designing families at Blissfold.”

“ Kind—amiable woman,” said Cuthbert. Kate made two tears, and placed herself on the footstool by “ Pappy’s” side, and kissed his hand.

“ Good—affectionate child,” said Cuthbert.

Cunning foxes—thought Nubley.

“ If it *is* a scheme, eh—dear, dear,” said Cuthbert to Nubley—“ it is a very silly one—agitating me for no purpose.”

"Scheme," said Nubley; "no, no—I am rather too old to play off jokes—the fact is the fact."

"So *you* say," said Kitty, pertly.

Impudent little minx—thought my friend. "My dear young lady," said he, "I never say what I do not mean."

"No," said Kate, who could not resist the temptation of being saucy, "on the contrary you always *do* say what you mean."

"Nor," continued Nubley, "state that which I cannot prove; here is the letter which I have received from the late firm of Chipps, Rice, Hickory, and Co., giving a statement of their failure, with a schedule of their debts and credits, and the painful result; which, as I said before, will produce a pice in the pound, or something of that sort; but which benefit, according to the terms upon which my friend here left his property in the business, will not accrue to him, inasmuch as, on the contrary, it forms part of the assets which are to secure that advantage to others."

"Dear me, dear me," said Cuthbert, and natu-

ral tears flowed down his furrowed cheek ; “how thoughtless—ah—that’s it—I left it all to Hicory—he did as he liked.”

“But, my dear Mr. Gurney,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “why should you distress yourself by telling the story ; is it likely that such an event should have occurred and you not have been the first person made acquainted with it?”

“Ah—that’s true,” said Cuthbert ; “eh ? Nubley.”

Silly creature—thought my friend ;—“that’s easily accounted for,” said he ; “I obtained the first intelligence, because, as I told you, the letter which encloses one to you, was sent to my agents, by Hicory, who, not knowing where you were in England, Wales, Scotland, or Ireland, begs me to forward it forthwith—and here it is.”

Saying which, he produced a packet directed to Cuthbert, the size and appearance of which produced a slight convulsive shudder on his emaciated frame.

“Eh dear ! dear !” said my poor brother—

"I can't read it—if what you say is true—it's no matter what I read. Here, Kate—open it—read it for me."

"I'll do it, my love," said Brandyball, taking the despatch from the hand of her "darling child."

"*Read it yourself, Cuthbert,*" muttered Nubley—"to trust affairs of such importance—to—eh?"

"I have perfect confidence," said Cuthbert—"I have no secrets—read—read it out."

Mrs. Brandyball, who, after all, was not much of a dab at reading manuscripts off-hand, and who soon became bewildered in a maze of mohurs, rupees (arcot and sicca), pagodas, pice, fanams, and cowries, went through her work as steadily as could be expected, until she had finished the last paragraph, which referring to the "State, Schedule, and Account Current," brought to her conviction the full and entire truth of every word that Nubley had said, and corroborated the fact that the amiable Cuthbert, instead of a creditor of the estate, had been

converted into a responsible part of the firm, where he had since his departure figured as the "Co." which was added to their "style" as soon as he had set sail from Saugar.

"It's all true enough," said Mrs. Brandyball.
"Poor, dear Mr. Gurney!"

"Yes, yes," said Cuthbert, throwing himself back on his sofa—"true—but," added he, lifting himself gently up, assisted by Kate, who raised his head, "Providence is always good—this is a sad blow—but—it—has kindly afforded me consolation—eh dear! eh dear!"

"How?" said Nubley.

"In these dear kind creatures near me," said Cuthbert, half-sobbing—"they will take care of me — soothe me — ah!—I ought to be very grateful."

Poor old buffer!—thought Nubley; "umph!"

"I have nobody to look to but them."

Nubley, with all his eccentricities, was a quick observer, and the expression of Mrs. Brandyball's countenance during the delivery of Cuthbert's last bit of "recitative" was not lost upon him.

"No, Mr. Gurney," said the lady, when he had concluded, "Providence has raised you more and better friends than *me*, to whom the cherishing and solacing you under affliction will be equally a duty and a pleasure. Kindly as you think of me, I am not vain enough to suppose that my claims upon your affection can be superior to theirs."

"They are," said Cuthbert; "I have told you so; I am pledged to you—and your own words, spoke to me a quarter of an hour ago—eh! dear me!—they convince me—that—my opinion of your regard for me is not misplaced."

"No," said Kate, who was, for some reasons best known to themselves, up to this period certainly attached to Mrs. Brandyball, and was too young to appreciate the sudden change in that lady's feelings, consequent upon the alteration of my brother's circumstances—"no, dear Pappy, that they are not; we will work for you, and do whatever we can for you."

"It would be rather difficult, Miss Kate," said Mrs. Brandyball, "to ascertain the manner in

which, with your idleness of disposition and flightiness of character, you could contribute to the support of your father-in-law. However, we had better leave Mr. Nubley and Mr. Gurney together—they have really serious business to discuss—matters with which of course we can have nothing to do.”

“Idleness and flightiness!” said Kate, colouring crimson—“who made me idle?—who taught me to be flighty?—if I am flighty and idle.”

“Come, Miss Falwasser,” replied Brandyball, warming, “don’t answer *me*—I will suffer no pertness so long as you continue under my roof.”

“*Your* roof!” exclaimed Kitty; “I’m sure Pappy——”

“Be silent, Miss!” interrupted the lady; “leave the room this moment.”

“I sha’n’t, Ma’am,” answered the irritated girl.

“Oh, my dear child,” said the placid, good-natured Cuthbert, “don’t speak in that way to

Mrs. Brandyball—if you love me, dear, never treat her with disrespect.”

“ I want none of her respect,” said the lady ;
“ I merely want decency of behaviour. And so long as you both stay here, I will take care not to be spoken sharply to, by a pert, forward chit like Miss Kitty.”

Saying which the irate lady bounced out of the room.

“ Go after her, Kate,” said Cuthbert—“ go, there’s a dear.”

“ I’ll leave the room, Pappy,” said Kate,
“ because I will do all I can that you bid me—
but I will not go near her.”

And with these words, illustrated by a flood of tears, Kate, anxious to conceal her agitation, rushed out of the apartment.

Whereupon Nubley, taking up the skirts of his coat, danced grotesquely round the room, to his own singing of an old country dance.

Cuthbert opened his eyes to their full extent, and evidently thought him mad, and expressed as much in his astonished countenance.

"That's it—that's it!" cried Nubley.

"What?" asked Cuthbert.

I shan't tell him yet, thought he. "Oh, nothing—nothing—only something—he's as blind as a bat—never mind."

Saying which, and being nearly breathless with his eccentric exertions, he threw himself into his chair, and completed the astonishment of his friend by wishing him joy of the news from India.

"Joy!" said Cuthbert.

"Yes, joy," repeated Nubley: "out of evil comes good. You are as innocent as a baby; this misfortune will prove your friends—eh, don't you see? *Not he.*"

Nor did he. The brief experience which Nubley had already of Mrs. Brandyball's conduct during the ten minutes subsequent to her conviction that the history of Cuthbert's ruin was true, satisfied him of results for which Cuthbert himself was in no degree prepared, and Nubley's sense of perception, so oddly disguised by the absence of his mind, and, in fact, its wanderings

whenever its energies were not applied to any particular point, led him to conclusions of a more satisfactory nature than I anticipated, even after having read his first much-wished-for letter descriptive of his proceedings as far as they had gone.

The dialogue between Nubley and my brother, to the enjoyment of which they had been left by the retirement of Mrs. Brandyball, continued for upwards of an hour, during which period Nubley, letting out as few of his private thoughts and secret opinions as possible, confined himself to an examination and comparison of the accounts of the "departed" firm of Chipps, Rice, Hickory, and Co., and, in order to further the views which he thought most advantageous for Cuthbert, to a representation in the strongest terms of the irremediable wreck of his fortunes. Cuthbert bore this exhibition of melancholy facts with patience, and even firmness, till feeling exhausted, and, as Nubley thought, anxious about the fair partner of his future existence, who was destined to soothe and cheer him under the change of

circumstances—for to this straw the drowning bankrupt still clung—he begged Nubley to ring the bell, a favour which he asked oftener in the course of the day than any other, and from the soliciting which he might have been entirely relieved by the ordinary addition of a yard or two of line to the bell-rope.

Nubley obeyed his orders, or rather fulfilled his request.

“Twice—pull twice,” said Cuthbert, “if it is not too much trouble.”

Nubley again did as he was bid, and again Hutton, the faithful genius of the “ring,” stood before his master.

“Is my little basin of soup ready, Hutton?” said Cuthbert.

“No, Sir, I believe not,” said Hutton.

“It is near one, eh?” asked my brother.

“Past one a good deal, Sir,” said Hutton.

“Why,” said Cuthbert, “that’s very odd—eh dear!—I am such a creature of habit—eh? It is a little mess that Mrs. Brandyball always makes for me herself,” murmured he to Nubley:

"she never fails;—does she know what o'clock it is? She's as punctual—eh, dear!—ask her—give my love, and ask her."

"Mrs. Brandyball is out, Sir," said Hutton: "she went out about an hour ago."

"Is Miss Kate with her?" said Cuthbert.

"No, Sir," replied the servant: "Miss Falwasser, I believe, is in her room."

Bravo that's it!—thought Nubley, louder than usual.

"Ask her to come here—eh dear, eh dear," said Cuthbert. "Why, where can that good woman be gone? I dare say to try and be of some service. They are all so kind—eh?—and that —"

"I dare say she has," said Nubley—*fudge* (thought).

"Eh, what?" said my brother.

"I dare say she has," replied Nubley; "but I hope she will be discreet—because, don't you see? The news of a fall like this may do mischief—hurry in bills—eh?—*I wonder if he owes much here.*"

"Owes!" answered Cuthbert, believing the question actually addressed to him; "I owe a good deal in little matters; but I hope—eh, dear—some arrangement may be made for this dear good woman. The outlay has been, you know, for our joint comfort, and—some allowance—eh dear—it is very shocking;—I wish I were well enough to be more affected by it; but—she—she will manage all—she manages everything, she has such a head."

"Yes," said Nubley, looking at Cuthbert's frisky wig, "and so have you; but, you'll excuse me, I doubt the success of her plans——"

At this moment Kitty returned to the room, bearing in her hand, on its accustomed little salver, the desiderated (I like the word, it is so long and so new) basin of broth.

"Ha!" said Cuthbert, "thanks, dear. What, did Mrs. B. tell you to bring it me before in her absence, and you forgot it?"

"No, Pappy," said Kate; she told me nothing about it, for I have not seen her since she

left you : if she had, I should not have forgotten the time. *She* forget it herself."

Saying which, she drew the little table to the sofa's side, and placed upon it the wonted, and in the present case much "wanted" *potage*, till now ever tendered to him by the hand of Brandyball herself.

Hereabouts Nubley, who never doubted as to the ulterior results of the explosion which he foresaw, began to calculate as to the origin and cause of Kate's present affectionate conduct to her father-in-law. His thoughts upon the point lay so deep in his mind, that they did not bubble up into expression ; he looked at her, and thought she had never seemed so nice or so pretty before. The question with him was whether her kindness more strongly evinced itself in proportion to the defection of her valued preceptress, or that she made an exhibition of that kindness in order, if (as she was quite quick enough to think possible) Brandyball should abandon "Pappy" in his poverty, she might secure a home and comfort with those who were

more likely to take care of him. Nubley weighed all this; and, as a jury are always directed to lean to mercy, at the conclusion of his consideration he felt more favourably towards the attendant sylph than usual. Pending the operation of these doubts, Hutton made his appearance with two letters for Cuthbert, folded longwise, and which bore no external evidence of being *billet-doux*.

“What are these?” said Cuthbert. “Eh?—dear me—two more letters! Kitty, dear, open them for me.”

“The persons who brought them wait for answers, Sir,” said Hutton.

“Let them wait a little,” said Cuthbert. “Go, and tell them to stop.”

Hutton bowed and retired.

When he was gone, Kate, according to order, broke the seal of the first, and read—

“Bath — 24 — 18

“Sir,—Having a large bill due to-morrow, we should feel very much obliged by your favour—

ing us with a cheque for the amount of the little account enclosed.

“We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

“BRIGHT and TWIZZLE.”

“Oh!” said Cuthbert. “Ah!—I know—a small affair. I desired dear Mrs. Brandyball to order a few things—trinkets—read, is the bill there, Kate?”

“Yes, Pappy,” said Kate.

“Read it, love,” said Cuthbert.

She did read it.

Bath, 18—.

CUTHBERT GURNEY, Esq. Dr. to BRIGHT and TWIZZLE.

		£	s.	d.
14th.	One pair of drop brilliant ear-rings	.	84	16 0
	One pair bracelets, blue enamel, centre diamonds, with pearls, clasp with emeralds, as per order	.	168	14 0
15th.	Gold watch, double case, diamonded in seven holes, repeating, seconds, &c. &c.	.	73	10 0
	Massive gold neckchain for ditto, at 20 <i>l.</i> per yard—two yards and a half	.	50	0 0
	Hoop diamond ring, fine brilliants	.	63	0 0
	Carried forward	.	440	0 0

Brought forward	440	0	0
17th. Pearl necklace ear-rings and bracelets, superb set, gold snaps, with diamonds, complete	575	0	0
Amethyst brooch, set with large diamonds	260	0	0
One gold toothpick	0	18	6
	<hr/>		
	£1275	18	6

"Dear me," said Cuthbert, "that is a great deal. I—I—recollect buying the gold toothpick—eh?—and saying, I thought dear Mrs. Brandyball would like a watch and chain, which I gave her; but—eh!—this is very surprising!"

"Not to *me*," said Nubley. "Now, Miss Kitty, let's have the other."

"Oh!" said Kate, unfolding a memorandum of most exceeding length, "this is the upholsterer's bill, for the furniture and things."

"Ah!" said Nubley, "never mind reading it all through. What is the sum total?"

"What, at the bottom?" said Kate.

"Yes," said Nubley.

"The sum total," stammered Kitty; "it is one, and a nine, and eight, and a four, and then there is a fifteen and a six."

"What!" cried Nubley, "can't you count, Miss? Have you been at school I don't know how many years, and can do no more than that? Here, let me see—here—yes—sure enough, Cuthbert, here is a bill for furniture. One thousand nine hundred and eighty-four pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence—what say you to *that*?"

"I dare say," said Cuthbert, "it is all correct—the furniture was wanted—eh, dear?—but where is Mrs. Brandyball herself—she will set all this to rights—eh?—what makes the people send just to-day—eh?"

"I think I could guess," said Nubley—"eh! *so would anybody in the world except yourself.*"

"As for Mrs. Brandyball," said Kate, nearly trembling with rage against her darling governess, "she is gone into town I know, and if she never comes back I don't care."

"Oh dear, dear Kate!" said Cuthbert, "don't talk in that way about a person with whom you will soon be so nearly connected."

"Shall I?" said Kate, who knew more of the world by half than her respectable father-in-law at four times her age, "I'm not so sure of *that*."

"Dear, dear," said Cuthbert, "what do you mean?—why—eh?—what does it all mean?"

"Why," said Nubley, "it means that you *were* rich, you are now found out to be poor; fair-weather birds all fly away in the storm."

"Yes, Mr. Nubley," said Mrs. Brandyball, entering the room with all the impassioned dignity of a tragedy queen; "but no birds are to be caught with chaff, at least if they have any instinct, or are not very young indeed."

Cuthbert's astonishment at the appearance and aspect of his intended, was something perfectly indescribable.

"Yes, Sir," continued the lady, addressing her astounded victim, "you—*you*, Sir, have induced me, under false pretences, to give up my school, to throw myself out of a good livelihood, and now you turn out to be a bankrupt. How can you justify yourself?"

"My dear Mrs. B.," said Cuthbert, "I was

up to this morning as innocent of the fact—eh, dear!—eh, dear!—as yourself, and——”

“Innocent!” said the lady, with a sneer worthy of a comic actress of the first water, “yes, innocent enough, Heaven knows; but you must have known what was going to happen to you.”

“Not I,” said Cuthbert: “I trusted to friends, and have been deceived.”

“More fool you!” almost screamed the gorgon. “But what am *I* to do? how am *I* to be satisfied?”

“Your kind affection for me——” said Cuthbert.

“Affection for what?” cried the sweet instructress of young females: “affection for *you*! What upon earth could make anybody care about a shrivelled piece of parchment in calico pantaloons like you, except——”

“What!” said Cuthbert. “What do I hear?”

“Why, I tell you what you hear,” continued the virago; “you have induced me to break up

my establishment—my seminary — my Montpelier. I have sent away my young ladies; I have relied upon you, and see what has happened—!”

“Surely,” said Cuthbert, raising himself somewhat energetically on his elbow, “surely this must be—eh?—this—is—eh, what?”

“What?” cried the lady, “why, I tell you what—it is this: you have suffered yourself to be fooled out of your property, and I have suffered myself to be fooled out of my business; my girls are gone, and I gave up a fine connexion to become your wife.”

“And,” said Cuthbert, still clinging to the hope that she really did love him, ‘for himself alone,’ “and I am still ready to fulfil the engagement.”

Tom Noddy—thought Nubley.

“Are you?” said the lady. “Thank you for nothing. I am not likely to throw myself away upon an old bankrupt.”

“Oh! Mrs. Brandyball,” said Kitty, in a tone which delighted Nubley, who entertained a

sanguine expectation that the exposure of the roundabout governess's real character would work well in bringing the truant heart of the elder Falwasser back to its natural, or, at least, its most congenial home.

"Oh!" cried the infuriated woman, "I don't know what you mean by oh! Miss. *My* belief is that you care about as much for your 'Pappy,' as you call him, as I do. You loved him for what you thought you could get, and I—but no matter, I must be paid, and that directly—I say, directly, Sir," looking at Nubley, "for all that is due for the board and education of the girls."

To attempt a description of Cuthbert's countenance, or the agitation of his frame, while the great lady in the little parlour was fulminating all these her denunciations, would be impossible; he turned deadly pale, his limbs quivered, and he sank back like a corpse against the back of the sofa.

Kitty rushed out of the room, and, in less than a minute, returned with Hutton and some

water. Nubley rose from his seat, and lifted poor Cuthbert up.

"It's all very fine, fainting," said Mrs. Brandyball, "but tricks upon travellers won't do. I have been imposed upon, ruined, destroyed."

"Hold your tongue, Ma'am," said Nubley.

"I shall do no such thing, Sir," screamed his female antagonist. "This is *my* house, and I shall do as I please in it."

"I am very glad, Ma'am," said Nubley, "to find that it *is* your house, because in that case my poor friend here is not responsible for any portion of either rent or furniture."

"I don't mean *that*, Sir," exclaimed the lady, while Hutton was endeavouring to restore poor Cuthbert to a sense of his situation. "He *is* responsible."

"Ah!" said Nubley, "so you say, Ma'am."

"Say," screamed she, "I not only say, but know. Who is to pay the bills which have been just brought in, besides others that I expect?"

—Who is to pay the upholsterer's bill—the jeweller's bill—the——”

“ You, Ma'am,” said Nubley:—“ *that's a settler*—eh ! don't you see?—if—and see what a virtue there is in an if—if you, out of pure love and affection for my respected bit of parchment in calico pantaloons, had married him, he, poor dear body, would have been in for it: but, no, there is no responsibility, Ma'am; he admits eighteen shillings and sixpence for a toothpick, for which, in his name, I will pay; but as for the rest, that's your own affair, and you may go and whistle for it, old lady.”

“ Old what, Sir ?” said Mrs. Brandyball.

Old devil—thought Nubley.

“ You are extremely civil, Sir,” said she; “ but that won't do.”

“ Yes, it will,” said Nubley. “ If you will show me any authority from Cuthbert to you to use his name and obtain credit at these shops, then I will not deny his liability; but, if not——”

"Mr. Gurney," said the lady to my recovering brother, "do you not recollect the jeweller's bill?—did you not get credit there—eh?"

"Yes," said Cuthbert—"eh!—dear, yes—I own that eighteen shillings—eh, dear!—and sixpence—for a toothpick; but——"

"A what!" cried the lady. "Do you mean to say——"

"I mean to say, Ma'am," said Nubley, "that my friend here is not answerable for any extravagant bills of yours."

"Then, Sir," said the lady, walking up to Nubley, in a kind of Amazonian march, "who is to pay them?"

"You, Ma'am, if you please," answered Nubley, by no means intimidated with her manner of approach; "Mr. Gurney shall pay you every farthing due to you for the education of the girls, and whatever you choose to charge for board and lodging, but——"

"Board and lodging, you vulgar monster!" cried the lady; "do I keep a boarding-house—a lodging-house?"

“ Yes,” said Nubley, “ both—and something worse for all I know—only don’t be saucy. Now, I’ll tell you—you thought you had duped and deluded this poor dear friend of mine—a piece of parchment in calico, eh !—into marrying you ; and if it hadn’t pleased Providence to ruin him beforehand, then you’d have had him now ; when he gets out of his fainting fit he’ll find exactly the sort of wife he would have had, and appreciate your affection for him and his children.”

“ Affection !” said the lady ; “ who talks about affection ? Children !—I am sure I shall be too glad to get rid of Miss Kitty—when I am paid my bill ; but what am I to do about the others ?”

Tol der ol lol ! thought Nubley ; *who cares ?*
“ Cuthbert, my friend, how d’ye feel ?”

“ Dying,” said Cuthbert ; “ I could not have fancied—eh !—anything so hard-hearted—so cruel !”

“ What d’ye mean by cruel, Sir ?” said Mrs. Brandyball. “ Who is the deceiver ?—what

did you tell me?—what did you offer me?—settlements—money—jewels!”

“Show us the writings, Mistress,” said Nubley. “He hasn’t been fool—that is, I mean good-natured—enough, to put pen to paper beyond a cheque or so, eh?—no, no, old lady.”

“Old!” screamed the governess.

“Elderly,” said Nubley.

“Elderly,” screamed she, still louder.

“Chickabiddy, if you like, Ma’am,” said Nubley. “All I mean to say is, that if you will make out your bill, Ma’am—whatever it is, Ma’am—I’ll pay that, and take my friend away, Ma’am. As to the bills which you have thought proper to run up upon the chance of marrying him—those, Ma’am, you’ll pay yourself.—Hutton.”

“Yes, Sir,” said Hutton.

“Send down into Bath, and order horses to be ready at two.”

“What does it all mean?” said Cuthbert.

“Dear Mrs. Brandyball—I thought I knew your heart—I am sure—eh dear!—this is a

mistake—eh!—you will not give me up?—eh dear!—misfortune is—eh!”

“Give you up!” exclaimed the lady; “Sippets—give up what?”

“*Parchment in calico*,” thought Nubley.

“That’s it,” said she, “give up——”

“And Kate,” said Cuthbert, throwing a pair of eyes grown into gooseberries pathetically at the girl, “Kate, eh?”

“The sooner we part the better,” said Mrs. Brandyball; “I know quite enough of *her*—and I don’t think I am likely, after all the trouble I have had with her, to keep her for nothing. You had better bundle *her* back to Bengal.”

“Brute!” said Kitty, and rushed out of the room.

It’s all right, thought Nubley. “And now, Ma’am, if you will just tot up your account for the schooling and *that*, I’ll arrange the whole matter. I don’t think it would be pleasant for my friend to stay here any longer; and his

circumstances will not allow him, as you know, to support his present mode of living."

"I never make out accounts," said the lady, "especially for persons situated as I have been relatively with the poor old man. I only want to know if you will pay the tradesmen's bills which I have incurred in expectation of the union of your friend with myself."

"Not one penny, Ma'am," said Nubley.

"What, not the jeweller's?"

"No—not a farthing, Ma'am," said Nubley, "beyond the eighteen shillings and sixpence for the tooth-pick, which he admits."

"Tooth-pick!" said the lady, with a sneer, evidently intended to convey an expression of contempt derogatory to poor Cuthbert's "ivory."

"A greater scamp I never heard of," said Mrs. Brandyball; "but I'll hunt him—pursue him—I'll have the money."

"No, you won't," said Nubley; "you are luckily found out, Ma'am; and if my friend is ruined to a certain extent, he is saved from

a much worse ruin which was in store for him."

At this moment Kate returned, having been evidently crying. She was dressed for a start—bonnet, shawl, &c.

"Oh, Miss Pert, you are come," said Mrs. Brandyball; "much good you'll come to, *my dear* (with a sneer). And where are you going to?—to the linen-draper's prentice, or the dancing-master?"

"I'm going," said Kate, bursting into a flood of tears, "with my poor dear father-in-law, wherever he goes."

"Affectionate love!" said Mrs. Brandyball; "going with Pappy?"

"Yes, Ma'am," said Kate, "to the world's end with him; and if it hadn't been for what I learned under your roof, I never should have deserved the insults you have cast upon me."

"Fine girl!" said Mrs. Brandyball; "a very fit daughter for a bankrupt impostor."

"Ma'am," said Nubley, "we are rather

pressed for time—will you make out your bill, and we——”

“There’s no bill,” said Cuthbert, recovering from his trance, and seeming really to awaken to a “sense of his condition”—“Mrs. B. has had five hundred pounds last week.”

“Oh!” said Nubley; “tol der lol lol!—five hundred pounds—that’s a settler!—we want no bills. Hutton—pack up—pack up—make haste, we are going.”

“Yes,” said the lady, “but the bills I have incurred——”

“I tell you again, you must pay them,” said Nubley.

“No, no,” said Cuthbert, “let me do what is right—I would rather—eh dear!”

“Rather,” said Nubley, “you are a bankrupt—you can do nothing—no!—old parchment in calico!—I’ll take you out of *this*, and whenever you find it convenient to settle those accounts of the jeweller, upholsterer, and other similar sort of people——”

“Yes, Sir,” said Mrs. Brandyball, attentively,

and with a degree of mingled interest and civility.

“——Recollect, Ma’am, the old proverb about the slip between the cup and the lip—but don’t trouble Mr. Gurney; you have got the goods—you will have to pay for them. And so now, Hutton, how do we get on?”

“The carriage is at the door,” said Hutton, to whom, in point of fact, Nubley, upon his first arrival, had given instructions to get horses ready—the appropriate appearance of which startled poor Cuthbert, and made Kitty as happy as possible.

“So,” said the lady, “you are going—are you?”

Nobody answered, but all proceeded in their different modes of preparing for a departure.

There are several ways in which rage, disappointment, vengeance, jealousy, despair, &c. &c. &c. may be exhibited. The great heart of the combustible Brandyball was not to be trifled with; with her it must be all or nothing; either the explosion would be something that nobody

could withstand, or all the elements of confusion must be hidden under a bushel. She saw that she had over-reached herself; a few days more would have united her to Cuthbert, and, bankrupt or not, all her expensive bills, run up, not upon his personal responsibility, but upon the contingency of his marriage, would have fallen upon him, and by so much the more have decreased the dividend on his estate; but this was not destined to be—she was quite lawyer enough to know that. The failure of her great object beat her down, and the very recollection of the fawning flattering devotion she had paid to the poor invalid whom she, in the plenitude of her rage, had now denounced, drove her to the conclusion that her best course would be to treat the parting trio with what she considered contempt; and therefore, when the carriage was announced packed and ready, she struck her forehead with her hand, and ran out of the library upstairs into her own room, where she threw herself upon her bed, much to the peril of the legs and feet of the bedstead, and burst

into tears; not, however, quitting the "presence" of her evanescent guests without ejaculating something which, as no lady ought ever to enunciate it, so no lady should be exposed to the pain of finding it recorded.

All this, and other proceedings of minor importance, but which in their details satisfied me that Nubley had acted in the most correct and even liberal manner toward the dependents of the household, and, indeed, had behaved, as I had dreamed of him, most *angelically* (and never, never—so long as I live—will I take a prejudice against any man when I first see him) I learned from himself, dear old fellow! And who can describe—I am sure I cannot—not the delight only, but the surprise—the joy, I may truly say—when, upon the evening of that day which I had resolved should be the last of suspense, we were roused from a somewhat heavy evening's *cause* after our tea by the usual dog-barking, bell-ringing, gravel-grinding noise which unquestionably announced an arrival. It could be nobody but Nubley. I sprang from

my chair; Mrs. Nubley cried "Lauk!" and Harriet begged me not to flurry myself. However it was a burst of feeling, and nothing could stop me. I rushed into the hall, and, oh! how—in what words, by what means—can I express the blessedness of my feelings, the extent of my happiness, when I saw my beloved brother Cuthbert, ruined as he was—beggared by his own improvidence—but dearer to me than ever—lifted almost from the carriage into the house? The frailty of its tenure to me at that moment was nothing; I caught him to my heart and burst into tears: I *did*—and I am not ashamed to write it down. My position was altered—I felt proud and happy—it was now for *me* to show how I would succour and support my nearest relation upon earth. It was all a mystery what had happened; Cuthbert leant on my arm—he pressed it—not a word was spoken—I understood nothing of what I saw, but my whole soul was engrossed by the possession of my brother, who, it seemed clear to me, had been rescued from the Brandyball. I shook

Nubley's hand, and felt encouraged by his emphatic squeeze of mine. Kate I had not then seen, but what my sensations were may be guessed when I placed my half-fainting brother on his accustomed sofa, and saw Kitty, the object of my aversion, run to Harriet, throw herself upon her knees, and, bursting into tears exclaim—

“Forgive me!—all, all here forgive me!—I am not what I was.”

Without then knowing what had happened beyond the fact that we were all ruined financially, I believe that was the happiest moment of my life.

In setting down these matters I have anticipated, as it were, the results which brought about this

“Consummation devoutly to be wished;”

but the sequel is beautiful, as showing that which the “evil eye” of the censorious seldom sees, or chooses to see. It was perfectly true

that Cuthbert, by his extraordinary carelessness and inanition, had permitted himself to be ruined; but that human pine apple, Nubley, whose rough and repulsive coat covered a heart full of the richness of liberality, did not allow the evening to pass without making me understand that as his fate and fortunes had been linked with Cuthbert's through life, and that he had no existing relation that he knew of, that his failure should never affect him. It is true that Nubley deplored the want of a family in terms which, whether eloquently or cogitatively expressed, there seems no necessity for repeating, the only remark upon which, I make in the words of his excellent lady, who, at the close of his lamentations, screamed out as usual—

“Lauk, Mr. Nubley, you are such a man !”

But the second or third day after this happy return of our absent friends, I had another opportunity of beholding human nature in a delightful point of view; and what a blessing it is to be able to put upon record traits calculated

to vindicate our common fallibility against the sweeping censure of the satirist and cynic.

Kate's experience of Mrs. Brandyball's conduct and treatment of her "dear girls," had made her an altered person, as she herself professed. Although but a few days older than when she left us, she had gained years in the power of appreciating the real character of that fiend, as I have already said, not in human shape. High spirited and warm tempered, the moment she saw the sudden change in her conduct towards Cuthbert, ten thousand "trifles light as air" flashed into her mind, which convinced her that she had been playing *that* game ever since her return, and that the game she had been playing before his arrival had been even worse; in fact, she was now old enough to know that a more artful, designing, dangerous woman never lived than her once "dear governess;" to which conclusion she very shortly led Harriet, who, to say truth, did not require much urging, especially after what our dear little Jenny had told us, to believe that Montpelier was an establish-

ment which most especially demanded an extraneous *surveillance*. I do not like to put upon paper all I have heard, but, in spite of the brick walls and the "broken bottles," I have a notion that Montpelier, however good for the bodily health of the "dear little angels," was by no means advantageous as regarded their moral or spiritual state.

Well ! there is nothing at which one ought to start ; but—and I say *but* with an emphasis—I declare and protest that when I saw Kitty—without any further professions, a beautiful girl—no left shoulder stuck out of her frock, and at least another inch of tucker in front of it—totally changed in manner, fond of her sister, affectionate to Cuthbert without pretension, and endeavouring by every means to gain Harriet's good opinion, my feelings toward her took an entirely new turn ; and all at once I thought how painful it will be (for the whole history of our remaining at Blissfold was problematical) for this girl, growing into womanhood, to be domesticated close to Kittington, the dancing-

master, to whom she had made such extraordinary advances.

Extraordinary, indeed!—but much more extraordinary was what followed. Our new arrivals had not been landed a week—during which the dear Nubley—except what I could catch from his involuntary “oozings,” had given me no kind of idea to what extent his munificence would go—when Mr. Kittington’s name was brought up to me. He wished to speak to me. Having the respect for him which his highly honourable conduct upon a former occasion had created, I, without a moment’s delay, went down to him in my morning-gown.

I found him in deep mourning; he appeared considerably agitated; I saw his embarrassment, and paused to give him time to “collect his scattered thoughts;” still he hesitated, and again I bowed.

“Mr. Gurney,” said he, at length, “you remember that I once paid you a visit here—of an unprofessional nature—I——”

The moment he got this length I satisfied

myself that Miss Kitty, in spite of appearances, had been making a second attack upon my worthy companion.

"It is with reference to that circumstance," said my visitor, "that I am again here."

"What!" said I, "has the young lady again——"

"Oh no," interrupted Mr. Kittington, "circumstances are so altered, short as is the time that has elapsed since the event to which you refer, that I stand before you in a totally different position." Hereabouts he seemed to gain new courage, and stand erect, and look steadily. "I believe," continued he, "I told you that my father was a man of high honour and respectability, although unfortunate—my mother, a lady by birth, who, excellent as her husband was, had disoblged her family by marrying him, has been for years estranged from her relations. I now have to state to you, Mr. Gurney, that her brother, my uncle, General Harlingham, relenting on his death-bed of an unjustifiable harshness against his exemplary sister, has left

me heir to all his property, real and personal, amounting to something more than seven thousand pounds per annum, on condition of my assuming his name."

"I assure you," said I, "I most sincerely congratulate you. The little I had the pleasure of seeing of your family gave me so favourable an impression of your character and qualities, that I am most happy to hear of your well-merited acquisition. I presume we shall lose you as a neighbour."

The moment I had uttered these words, I perceived his agitation return, his cheek flushed and turned pale, and his whole manner betrayed an emotion to me inexplicable.

"Mr. Gurney," said he, "I confess this is one of the most trying moments of my life. I am but young. I trust and hope the reverse of fortune which has befallen me will not induce me to commit myself. If it does, I think in your hands my character is safe. I would give the world that you could anticipate what I am about to express."

"I have no notion," said I; "but, whatever it is, rely upon my most anxious desire to hear it."

"Miss Falwasser," said Kittington, or rather Harlingham—"Miss Falwasser——" and then he paused.

"Oh!" said I, "you must banish all that from your mind; your conduct was so honourable—and the affair will be forgotten—and——"

"I hope not," said Harlingham, as I must now call him. "I felt it my duty in my *then* position to do what I did: as a professional man, I could do nothing else; but I have never been happy since. And now, Mr. Gurney," added he, with tears in his eyes, tears of which no man of high and honourable feeling need be ashamed; "now, I will go farther upon that point than I did before—not to make you appreciate more highly the sacrifice I then made, but to induce you to listen to my present proposal. I admit that my admiration of the young lady in question was even then fervent and sincere, and that, although the stern sense of moral

obligation connected with the business I then followed, led me to betray a confidence which I had no right to encourage, I now request, as a gentleman and a man of fortune, permission to be received into your family as a suitor for the affections of Miss Katherine Falwasser."

I looked at him for a moment, and, having held out my hand to him, and pressed *his*, when I recovered, said,

"If you had one fortnight since made this proposal—honourable, noble as it is on your part—I should have said, 'No. Whatever my brother may say—I will not hear of it;'—but Kate Falwasser, misled, and spoiled by the horrid woman to whose care she had been incautiously consigned, has, since circumstances have occurred to try the real qualities of her heart, evinced so much good feeling and so much indignation at the conduct of her late preceptress, that I think I may, with perfect fairness to *you*, admit you to that intimacy with our family circle which you desire."

"I know," said Harlingham, "to what you

allude ; in a small society like Blissfold, family matters are no secrets, and I hope you will not think worse of me because it was when I found that, in all probability, from the rumours that were rife, Miss Falwasser would be portionless, I ventured to make my present offer."

There are of course some very extraordinary men to be found now and then, but this Kittington, or Harlingham, seemed to me a Phoenix. With his taste I had no disposition to quarrel, but all other feelings were absorbed in those of admiration at his honest and virtuous forbearance, evidently in opposition to the bent of his inclination in the first instance, and in his delicate anxiety to repair what he considered the violence he had done to Kate by exposing her amatory epistle.

The result of this interview was his admission into our circle, together with his mother and sister, and his consequent association with Kitty ; whose manners were so changed, and whose recollection of her former advances to her now

permitted lover, were so strongly impressed on her mind, that she could scarcely lift her eyes to meet his; indeed, so diffident did she appear in his presence, that Fanny Wells, some six or seven years her senior, began to think that she was not half sympathetic enough, and that Mr. Harlingham would be much happier with a wife a few years older. Wherein Fanny most probably was right; but that was no affair of mine, and Cuthbert, who had abandoned his wig, and seemed reconciled to his present state of misfortune, was well pleased to see Kitty pleased, and to see that everybody was pleased with Kitty.

It was but a short time after this interview, and during the agreeable intercourse between the families, that Nubley opened his whole generous intentions to *me*. He again reverted to his want of family, and the silliness of his wife, and then informed me that, under all the circumstances, and having no relations who had any claims upon him, he would, pending the investi-

gation of the complicated affair of Chipps, Rice, Hicory, and Co., put Cuthbert entirely at his ease ; “to do which,” added the good old man, “he must be put in the position to put you at your ease, too.” This gave me the highest opinion of Nubley’s generosity at the moment : what, then, were my feelings when I saw him, as usual, stubble his chin before the chimney-glass, and think out—“*and every shilling I have shall be yours when I die.*”

This “oozing” placed me in an extremely awkward position—that I had heard the words, and was consequently aware of his intentions, is most true ; but I felt it necessary to make my gratitude subservient to my civility, and therefore could not venture to admit that he had given utterance to thoughts which he had not meant to express.

I certainly communicated to Harriet what had fallen upon my ears ; and the involuntary expression was completely corroborated, as she told me, by the avowals of Mrs. Nubley, who declared,

“Lauk, he was sich a man when once he took a thing into his head,” &c. &c.

We had gone on for some fortnight in this way, Cuthbert apparently unconscious of what was the state of the case, but, nevertheless, anxiously fidgetty about Mrs. Brandyball, whose rage and disappointment at the frustration of her hopes were most awful. She wrote him one letter, which we, Nubley and I, under the circumstances of his health, felt ourselves justified in opening and answering: it was coarse, insolent, unfeeling; and, even while attempting to threaten him into some pecuniary sacrifice, admitted her only object in her intended marriage to have been securing his money; but, what was worse than all, it contained some anecdotes of Kitty, and allusions to her conduct while under her care, which, if any care had been taken of her, could never have occurred.

Nubley wrote her an answer; and, when we saw in the Saturday week's newspaper, quoted from the “Gazette” List of Bankrupts,—“Sarah

Brandyball, boarding-house-keeper, Montpelier, Bath, Co. Somerset, to surrender at the Lamb Inn, Bath, Thursday, February 14, at ten; Attornies, Messrs. Grab and Worry, Gay Street;" we did not feel more pity than could be reasonably afforded to a mass of unprincipled humanity, whose whole efforts under the cloak of kindness, refinement, and sentimentality, were to undermine and pervert the principles of the unfortunate victims for the instruction and edification of whom, she had neither means nor inclination.

Well, and here am I, come to the end of another note-book; and here, therefore, must I stop; but, happy as I am in the restoration of my brother, and his affection to me—delighted as I am to find Kate redeemed, and, as I hope, in a fair way to happiness—pleased as I am to find Jane all that I ever hoped her to be, my wife faultless, and my family circle most agreeable; Sniggs our own again, the Wellses the best-natured and kindest, and the Nubleys all we could desire; still I feel some apprehension that I *may*

be for a time unsettled. Nublely lets out that I might do a great deal of good by going to Calcutta—that he is too old himself to undertake the voyage, and that Cuthbert's removal would be annihilation; so I even now hold myself in readiness.

I received in the morning of to-day, the last I can record, a most extraordinary letter from Daly, who has married his "fortune," and is most zealous in his calling. Hull has also written to me, not choosing to travel back this road with his aunt, and tells me that matters will turn out better than we think with Chipps, Rice, Hiccory, and Co., as he "happens to know:" and the newspaper announces the death at sea of "Millicent, wife of Lieutenant Merman, of the 146th foot."

What a prospect opens as my book closes! all I can say is, that I am thankful to Providence for the successes which have arisen to me out of evil, and for that mercy and goodness which it extends even to the least worthy of human beings.

P. S. I see by the "Sun" of to-night, that Captain Thompson, *alias* Jemmy Dabbs, *alias* Bluff Jim, was last Tuesday sentenced to fourteen years' transportation for horse-stealing, having been apprehended, committed, tried, and condemned in the short space of twenty-eight hours.

THE END.